SECOND SERIES.

MORNINGS WITH MAM

OR

DIALOGUES ON SCRIPTURE

FOR

YOUNG PERSONS

FROM

TWELVE TO FOURTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

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TO

THE REVEREND DR. CHALMERS,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE,

WITH SINCERE RESPECT AND ESTEEM,

INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

In offering (with the increased diffidence inseparable from a sense of undeserved favour,) to the parents and instructors of youth, whose indulgent approbation sanctioned her former little volume, its present continuation—the Authoress of "Mornings with Mama" feels as if two slight observations might be necessary. The one explanatory of the selection—for a *second* sriees—of a subject antecedent in the order of Scripture to that embraced by the *first;* the other, relative to occasional deviations, (of which she is not unaware,) from the juvenile simplicity of style which she endeavoured to maintain throughout her former conversations.

Both have been, in a great measure, involuntary. The actual studies of a Sabbath school, affording the Author's chief key to the understanding and feelings of children, suggested the subject; and if, from its more elevated and spiritual nature, her explanations have insensibly risen above their former infantine

level, she is the less disposed to regret it, from the belief, that religious works, calculated to attract young persons from twelve to fourteen, are at present less abundant than those of a similar description for mere children.

For the moral and religious reflections contained in these dialogues, which have, as before, arisen spontaneously from a perusal of the chapters themselves, the Authoress fears she must be responsible; although indebted (as may readily be perceived) for much interesting information on other points, to the admirable work of Dr. Graves on the Pentateuch, and similar eminent authorities.

And now, her little contribution, such as it is, to the spiritual "nurture and admonition" of the young, is again committed, in trembling hope, to the blessing of Him, who hath said that the mere temporal refreshment of a "cup of cold water" given in His name to one of His "little ones," shall "in no wise fail of its reward."

MORNINGS WITH MAMA.

SECOND SERIES.

INTRODUCTORY DIALOGUE.

MAMA. Few things, my dear Mary, have afforded me more gratification, in returning to you after a painful but necessary absence, than your eagerly expressed wish that we should resume the course of scriptural readings and conversations which interested you so much last winter. You have since read, you tell me, with greatly increased attention, and, I trust in God, with increased advantage, many portions of your Bible; but conscientiously as this duty has been enforced by those who kindly undertook for me a troublesome charge, you say you have daily and sadly missed that minuteness of inquiry and unrestrained flow of conversational illustration, only perhaps to be expected from an anxious parent. May God, who by the instinctive dili-

gence of the fowls of the air, rebukes the neglect of many a mother in providing spiritual nourishment for her helpless offspring, bless to us both, endeavours begun and continued in his strength alone!

MARY. Mama! What shall we read this time? I wish I might choose.

MAMA. I am half tempted to let you do so, so fondly but partially, perhaps, do I reckon on that rational thirst for information and dawning intelligence in spiritual things which it made me so happy to observe in you, when we last talked together. What part of scripture would you wish me to level, as far as I can, to your capacity?

MARY. I am much puzzled to choose, Mama, there are so many I should like to know better. But perhaps we shall go through them all in time, and just now I want you to tell me regularly the history of the Israelites coming out of Egypt. It is very entertaining to read about them in the wilderness, and I have often tried to do it, but what happened to them is so mixed up, Mama, with laws, and names of people and places, and directions about building the tabernacle, and killing the beasts for sacrifice, that I find it hard to pick it out properly, and never know exactly which chapters concern us and which the Jews only.

MAMA. There is scarcely a word in the Bible, my dear, which does not, more or less, concern us; and learned men have drawn curious and most unexpected edification from the minutest particulars of the Mosaic ritual. But into these you are too young to enter, and I gladly comply with your wish to have the history of God's chosen people, separated from their peculiar institutions, for your present instruction. I shall only remark, that the very blending of subjects and apparent irregularity, of which you complain in the books of Moses, is the strongest proof of their having been written on the spot, and in the midst of the transactions they record. A later historian, not an eye-witness, would have given us a methodical narrative, (as, indeed, has been done by a clever Jew called Josephus) instead of a daily chronicle of events the most various and unconnected. This premised, we shall take up the thread at the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt in the beginning of Exodus, and pursue the history of their wanderings, as scattered through the subsequent books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, down to the final exhortations and death of Moses, their illustrious leader.

I know not that the whole Old Testament could have furnished us with a richer field than the one

you have unconsciously chosen, and for the reasons you have yourself given, it is one difficult for youth unassisted to explore. We have great encouragement, thus, to investigate it, for what says the apostle? "These things happened unto *them*, (the Israelites) for ensamples;" and having the benefit of his inspired commentary on many portions of their eventful history, it will be our own fault if we do not benefit by the warnings and instructions it holds out. Let us read this, like every part of Scripture, with a Christion spirit, and Gospel light will shed its saving illumination over the darkest pages of the record.

MORNING FIRST.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters i. and ii.

MAMA. The book of Exodus, which signifies "coming out," or "departing," shews us the posterity of the patriarch Jacob settled and flourishing in Egypt. Can you tell me, Mary, what carried their fathers thither?

MARY. Oh! yes. They first went to buy corn in a famine, and then took all their families with them, because Joseph, their good brother, invited them.

MAMA. How came Joseph to have power to do so in a foreign land?

MARY. Mama, every child knows that he saved the people of Egypt by laying up corn for them, and was made next to the king in honour and authority for it.

MAMA. Very well and clearly told. Was this eminent man remembered long after his death by a grateful nation?

MARY. It says here, "A new king rose up

which knew not Joseph:" but it does not say how long after.

MAMA. See if you can find it out by one circumstance. How many Israelites came originally into Egypt?

MARY. "Seventy souls," Mama, besides Joseph, who was there already.

MAMA. Well! Seventy people do not "multiply and wax exceeding mighty and fill a whole land" immediately. Turn to the 12th chapter, verse 37, and see how many souls went *out* of Egypt.

MARY. "Six hundred thousand men, besides children." Mama! how long this must have taken!

MAMA. About 260 years, and a wonderful increase it was for that period, under the special blessing of God, and in fulfilment of his promise made to Abraham, that "his seed should be as the sand on the sea-shore for multitude;" so sure is every word of God to come to pass! But what effect had this marvellous increase of these "strangers and sojourners" on the fears of the Egyptians?

MARY. It made them use them very ill, in hopes of lessening their numbers. How ungrateful and wicked besides!

MAMA. What was the nature of the cruelty and oppression exercised upon them?

MARY. "They made their lives bitter with hard bondage in mortar and in brick, and all their service was with rigour."

MAMA. And did all this "striving against God" produce the desired effect?

MARY. No. "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."

MAMA. What was their next expedient? a most effectual one apparently.

MARY. A shocking one, Mama! To make the Hebrew midwives kill all the sons of their poor countrywomen. They were quite right to refuse, but I wonder if the reason they gave for not doing it was *true*, or if they were afraid to tell the truth.

MAMA. We may be sure their conduct was upright, Mary, from one circumstance, viz. that it was approved and rewarded by God. How did he manifest this?

MARY. He "made them houses." Does it mean that he built them finer ones than they had before?

MAMA. Think a little. Does the "house of Israel," or "house of Judah," we so often read of, mean a building?

MARY. No: a family or nation.

MAMA. Well! the "houses" spoken of here are the large and flourishing families bestowed

upon these courageous women for their resista
to a heathen tyrant, and fear of the living G
a proof that "godliness is profitable in the
that now is as well as that which is to con
What barbarous order was next given for ex
minating the devoted Israelites

MARY. All the boys were to be thrown i
the river, and the girls saved alive. Why w
they spared?

MAMA. That by their marrying Egyptian
trace of the Israelites as a separate people mi
gradually be lost. But do you know what ri
is here meant? Now is the time to apply y
little geographical knowledge.

MARY. It must have been the Nile, Ma
I know it runs through Egypt, and I believe th
is no other.

MAMA. No, Mary; and so important is i
the existence of that country, as to be an obj
of religious worship. We shall have to tall
this further when we come to the "plagues."

MARY. Mama! now comes dear little Mo
and his ark of bulrushes! I have known ab
him all my life.

MAMA. Yes! as an object of childish sy
pathy. You must now recognise in him
chosen liberator of God's people. Of what tr
was he?

MARY. Of the tribe of Levi. How sorry his poor mother must have been when she could no longer hide him!

MAMA. Doubtless; but she was better off than many in having not only a daughter but another son. You forget his elder brother Aaron.

MARY. Oh! and how had he escaped?

MAMA. The decree, it is supposed, was not in force at his birth, as he was three years older than Moses. Still his mother was much to be pitied. How did she prove her faith in God?

MARY. She put the dear child in an ark of bulrushes. What a frail useless thing that must have been, Mama! It surely could not hold out water even for a moment.

MAMA. My dear, the word here translated "bulrushes," signifies the tall reed called "papyrus," which grows by the banks of the Nile, and of which many of the boats used on that river are still made. It was strong enough to have borne a far heavier weight, and, when properly prepared, impervious to water. But how precarious was the life of an infant thus exposed! There was the slow sure death of famine, if not speedily rescued by some charitable hand, and the more imminent peril arising from the alligators or crocodiles with which the river abounds.

MARY. Horrid monsters they are, Mama! Able to swallow poor Moses, ark and all, in a moment.

MAMA. Yes, if not restrained by the providence which watched over him. Who was made the unconscious instrument of God's future designs on the child?

MARY. The daughter of Pharaoh. How odd that she should have gone to bathe that day!

MAMA. And how far more striking, if, as is supposed, her compliance with an idolatrous custom in honour of the Nile, led to the signal triumph of true religion over idolatry, in her native land! Her being (as is mentioned by Josephus) a married woman without children, is another singular coincidence, and probably led to her adoption of the little foundling.

MARY. How sensibly his sister behaved! And how nicely she managed his being nursed at home. His mother must have been so happy!

MAMA. Doubtless, my dear. But God had a far higher end in view in thus overruling events than even the reunion of a mother and her child. Had Moses been estranged even in infancy from his people, and brought up entirely at the court of Pharaoh, he might have been learned indeed "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," but never could have sympathized in either

the religious feelings, or temporal miseries of his countrymen; nor would probably have made, when he "came to years," that memorable choice recorded for our edification by an inspired apostle, viz.—"Refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

MARY. Of *Christ*, Mama? Did the Israelites in Egypt believe in *him*?

MAMA. In a Saviour, or Redeemer, the enlightened among them it is probable did; though the spiritual nature of the redemption was as yet but darkly shadowed forth. But at all events, the resolution of Moses to renounce all this world could bestow, and "suffer affliction with the people of God," may be traced to feelings awakened in the humble dwelling of his persecuted parents. How did he first show his interest in the oppressions of his countrymen?

MARY. "When he saw an Egyptian smiting one of his brethren, he slew him." Had he any right to do this?

MAMA. My dear, the taking of human life can only be justified by self-defence, or the no less imperative duty of saving another in imminent jeopardy. St. Stephen, in the Acts, says

the poor Israelite was "suffering wrong," and had probably no way of escape but the one which Moses ("the meekest of men") must we are sure have reluctantly adopted. This is evident, from the necessity it laid him under, when he found it known—of forsaking all his advantages at the court of Pharaoh, and fleeing into Midian.

MARY. That was cowardly, Mama, was it not? God would have protected him there.

MAMA. Remember, my dear, that Moses had as yet no open commission from God to take the part of his countrymen; and killing another, under any circumstances, was, by the laws of of Egypt, certain death. Many of God's servants have thus withdrawn in times of peculiar peril. Do you remember any?

MARY. Elijah did, you know, into the desert, from the face of Jezebel—and it could not be wrong, for God sent ravens to feed him. And our Lord himself, at times, "walked no more openly, for fear of the Jews."

MAMA. For the same reason as Moses, viz. that the time for braving the utmost malice of his enemies was not yet come. What occurred in Midian to prove that want of courage had little share in Moses' character?

MARY. He helped the daughters of Reuel

against the shepherds that would not let them water their flocks. That was goodnatured as well as bold—but I wonder, Mama, that Moses married one of these Midianite women; I don't think it was right in him.

MAMA. Probably not; and it has sometimes struck me as the possible reason that, while the family of Aaron was consecrated to the highest honours of the priesthood, that of Moses was left totally undistinguished in Israel. Perhaps Moses too had misgivings, when he called his son born in that heathen land "Gershom," or a "desolate stranger;" as he must have felt himself to be, during his long sojourn of forty years, at a distance from his people, "an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, without hope"—but we shall soon see, *not* "without God in the world."

It was at this period of deep despondence in the mind of Moses, and probably in that of his countrymen, who in him had lost their sole protector, that the fulness of time being come, in the expiry of the four hundred years at the end of which God had promised Canaan to the posterity of Abraham, that gracious covenant "came up in rememberance before Him," and God "looked upon the children of Israel, and had respect unto them."

We may gather from the opening of this instructive history, deep insight into the inscrutable ways of providence. What could be more unfavourable to the existence and elevation of Moses, than his exposure in a frail canoe to the mercy of the winds and waves? What more apparently fatal to his exalted mission than his retreat as a fugitive into Midian? But did either defeat the counsel of God? No. And from the very delays in its accomplishment we may learn, with St. Peter, that the "Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as men count slackness," but merely defers till the maturity of those "times and seasons which he hath kept in his own power," the designs which all the "strength of his adversaries shall neither be able to gainsay nor resist." Let us apply this, Mary, whenever in our own experience the "wheels of His chariot" seem to our impatient finite conceptions "to tarry." As surely as at the precise period fixed by Omnipotence—the cry of the children of Israel came up to heaven, from the bondage of Egypt—so surely will the promise of deliverance to the tried and faithful Christian find its accomplishment in that "day of the Lord," known neither to the angels in heaven nor to the Son of man upon earth—but to the Father only!

MORNING SECOND.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters iii. and iv.

MAMA. I know not, my dear Mary, that the whole compass of Scripture affords a passage of greater sublimity than that contained in our present chapter, where Jehovah is introduced talking "face to face" with a trembling and well nigh overwhelmed mortal, and speaking of Himself in language as incomprehensible by unassisted man, as the subject of which it treats is unfathomable. But there is great and deep interest in this mysterious colloquy—and if we come to it with the humility becoming in such a Presence—we too may return from the "Mount of God," enlightened like Moses, in our understandings, and strengthened in the path of duty. How was the future lawgiver of Israel employed when thus highly favoured?

MARY. Keeping the sheep of his father-in-law.

MAMA. Do you remember any one else thus "taken from the sheep-fold" to be the ruler of God's people?

MARY. Yes, David, Mama, who was really a little shepherd boy, while Moses was brought up to better things.

MAMA. My dear, were we to form our estimate of "better things," as you call them, over the humbler employments of life, from the general tenor of Scripture—the conclusion would certainly be, that "not many wise, not many noble, not many rich in this world are called;" (I do not here mean to be the objects of God's future salvation) but to be eminent instruments in His providence on earth. The time would fail us to enumerate the outcast Moses, the fugitive Jacob, the prisoner Joseph—Elisha summoned from following the plough, and Saul from seeking asses, and David from keeping sheep, to be prophets and monarchs over God's people; and more striking still, the tent-makers, and fishers, and publicans, taken from their daily labour, and the receipt of custom, to "confound the wisdom of the wise," and change the face of the civilized world. But we must not ascribe this, as some have rashly done, to any inherent advantages of ignorance over learning—but merely to the additional glory reflected on the

majesty of God by the apparent inadequacy of His instruments. We have a proof of this in Moses, who, though keeping sheep, in compliance with primitive custom, had been prepared by God for the office of lawgiver by a most careful education. Who appeared to him on Mount Horeb?

MARY. The "angel of the Lord," Mama.

MAMA. Do you know what the word "angel" means? It signifies a messenger. Did God often send such on errands of mercy to man?

MARY. Yes. Angels came to Abraham, and to Lot, and to Zechariah the father of John, and Mary the mother of Christ, and many more.

MAMA. Very well; and did these highly favoured persons fall down and worship them?

MARY. No, Mama, the angels would not have let them; for when St. John wanted to do it once, the angel said, "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant."

MAMA. Then this could have been no mere "angel" or minister, but one far higher; for not only was worship permitted, but solemnly enjoined. It being impossible to ascribe the awful name of "Jehovah" to any created being, and equally impossible to designate by that of "angel" or "messenger" the first person in the glorious Godhead—all expositors have agreed in con-

cluding the "angel" here spoken of to be the Lord Jesus Christ, who is in Malachi expressly called the "messenger of the covenant,"—a conclusion corroborated by what is said of Moses, "preferring the reproach of Christ"—and by the assumption of the same lofty title "I am" by our glorified Redeemer in his appearance to John, Revelation i. 8. Under what visible similitude did the invisible Lord of heaven and earth now appear?

MARY. A flame of fire in the midst of a bush, burning but not consumed.

MAMA. A gracious token that He, who to his enemies is a "consuming fire," is but a "light to lighten his servants, and the glory of his people Israel." Was Moses allowed to approach the bush?

MARY. No, not too nigh; and he was desired to put off his shoes. Why so, Mama?

MAMA. As an eastern mark of deep reverence, observed in those countries to this day; the feet being there uncovered (as with us the head) in every superior presence. But all human grandeur shrinks into utter insignificance before the overwhelming majesty of that manifestation which caused Moses to veil his face on the ground. At a distance, he could readily and boldly answer, "Here am I;" but no sooner had his feet actu-

illy touched the "hallowed ground" of Jehovah's awful presence, than, like Job, he felt his insignificance, and "abhorred himself in dust and ashes." The nearer we draw to God, Mary, the humbler we are sure to grow.

MARY. Mama! I fear Moses was unbelieving as well as humble. He did not want to go at first on God's message.

MAMA. The infirmities of eminent persons, my dear, seem always especially noted in Scripture for our instruction; but it is a striking proof of Moses' humility that the one we are now reading was recorded by himself. An impostor, or even a proud man, would have told us a very different story. What token did God in His condescension hold out to Moses, to confirm his wavering faith?

MARY. That the Israelites, after coming out of Egypt, should serve Him on that mountain.

MAMA. And was this a likely event, think you? or did Horeb lie in the way from Egypt to Canaan?

MARY. I don't know.

MAMA. Quite the reverse; and nothing less miraculous than the passage of the Red Sea could have placed it in their devious path. Look at your map of Palestine when you have done reading, and you will see what I mean.

MARY. Mama, what could Moses mean by asking what name he should call the only true God by? Did the Israelites worship any other?

MAMA. It has been feared they did, living so long in the midst of a people "wholly given to idolatry;" and with as many names for their senseless deities as there were created things to deify and adore. It was to correct this shameful abuse, that the incommunicable name, expressive of eternal self-existence, was assumed by God in his message to his people: uniting and softening it with endearing condescension, by the more special adjuncts of the "God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." Remember, Mary, whenever, throughout your Bible, "The LORD" occurs in capital letters, it always signifies the awful and mysterious name "Jehovah." Think on the burning bush, and reverence it accordingly. What was the gracious promise thus solemnly announced and sanctioned?

MARY. That God would bring the Israelites into the land of the Canaanites—"a land flowing with milk and honey."

MAMA. Was this promise then first made?

MARY. Oh! no Mama, only repeated. It was first made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

MAMA. You see then with what propriety it was attested by God, as the God of those believ-

ing patriarchs. But how was this desirable object to be accomplished? Was it to be done in the first instance by Almighty power?

MARY. No. They were to ask leave of Pharaoh to go three days' journey into the wilderness, to worship their God. But God knew Pharaoh would not let them go. It was only to try him.

MAMA. Yes; and to justify by his obstinate refusals the ultimate vengeance of Jehovah, who, we may gather, had in view, in his "wonders upon Egypt," besides the emancipation of Israel (which He could easily have accomplished otherwise,) the vindication of his own Majesty on a nation of idolaters, and their degrading deities. This we shall see when we come to the "plagues;" every one of them aimed at some Egyptian superstition.

MARY. Mama! it seems hardly fair that the Israelites should "borrow" things from the Egyptians, when they never meant to come back and return them. God could hardly mean that.

MAMA. No, my dear; the mistake arises from mistranslation. The word cannot signify to *borrow*, as commentators say the same is used in that verse of the Psalms, "*Ask* of me, and I will give thee the heathen for an inheritance," where "*borrow*" would make the passage blasphemous nonsense. It should be rendered "ex-

act, or demand," and denotes, (what afterwards happened), that the Israelites should be bribed by presents of all or more than they *asked*, to rid the terrified Egyptians of their disastrous presence. Those who had laboured so many centuries—unrecompensed save by injuries—for their taskmasters, might well be authorized to levy, in the shape of a contribution, some part of their withheld wages.

The next chapter begins with the continued incredulity of Moses, and God's continued long-suffering under it. Mary, would a human superior have testified one-tenth of the forbearance of the "King of kings, and Lord of lords?" And does the object of such Divine patience, always, like meek Moses, endeavour to imitate it towards his fellow-worms? No! Fresh from the footstool of his indulgent Lord, he takes his erring brother "by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest." Of all persuasives to forgiveness among men, surely the daily sum of outrage on the patience of God, is the most unanswerable! By what miracle did he vouchsafe to encourage the doubting Moses?

MARY. By turning his rod into a serpent. I suppose Mama, he would be able to do this again, else it could not convince the Israelites.

MAMA. Yes. We shall find it repeated ere

long, in presence of friends and foes. Two other expedients were allowed him to remove their incredulity—so well did the God of this stiff-necked nation estimate their insensibility even to miracles. What farther objection did Moses make to engaging in his mission?

MARY. "O Lord, I am not eloquent, but slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

MAMA. And does this consist with what we know of him, and with what St. Stephen says—that he was "mighty in word?"

MARY. No, Mama; but it does with God's promise that "he would be with his mouth, and teach him what to say."

MAMA. Very well, indeed. Well might He who "maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind," give eloquence to whom he will! But not even this assurance of assistance from on high could conquer the sinful backwardness of Moses; and no wonder that it at length "wearied" the forbearance of God! Strange inconsistency! that mortals, ever ambitious of employment under earthly monarchs, should often "with one consent begin to make excuse," when summoned to the service of heaven! For this last lingering, however, of human contumacy, sovereign goodness devises a remedy, and Aaron is to be made spokesman for his reluctant bro-

ther. This final instance of condescension, with the assurance of direct inspiration implied in his being to his brother "instead of God,"—that is, the interpreter or organ of the Divine will—even Moses could not resist; and he went and took leave of his father-in-law, under pretence of a mere visit to his suffering brethren.

MARY. Why did he not tell the truth?

MAMA. It was necessary to conceal the perilous office in which he had embarked, lest Jethro—anxious for the safety of his daughter—should detain her and her children, whom Moses had determined should accompany him. How primitive is the spectacle of this lawgiver of Israel, this ambassador of the Most High God, quitting his flock in the desert, with his wife and children seated on an ass! Does it remind you of any other group of still more eminent personages?

MARY. Yes, very much of the picture in your Bible, of the flight into Egypt of our blessed Lord, and his mother, and Joseph. The one might almost stand for the other.

MAMA. And thus was given a double accomplishment to the prophecy quoted in the latter instance, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Who is so styled by God in the end of our chapter?

MARY. "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born; and I say unto thee, let my son go, that he may serve me, else I will slay thy son, even thy first-born."

MAMA. And did God redeem this awful threat?

MARY. That he did, Mama! Upon all the first-born of Egypt.

MAMA. And think you he will not requite on the sinful nations of the earth, the injuries of a Son, greater and dearer far? The temporal judgments of God are often but types of his future vengeance. But what temporal judgment overtook Moses on his journey?

MARY. Mama, it says "God met with him in the inn, and sought to kill him." Were there inns in the desert?

MAMA. No, my dear,—the word thus familiarly translated designates only some customary resting-place for travellers,—perhaps a cave, or grove of palm-trees. The visitation spoken of is supposed to have been some sudden disease, threatening the life of Moses. For what purpose was it sent?

MARY. I don't know.

MAMA. What rite was incumbent on all true Israelites since the days of Abraham?

MARY. Circumcision, Mama. I suppose Moses had neglected to circumcise his son.

MAMA. Yes; probably at the suggestion of his alien mother, who to avert her husband's danger, was now glad herself to perform what she must have been made to understand was essential to his recovery. We see here, how near an unhallowed alliance was to producing fatal consequences, and that though not before censured, it could scarcely have been pleasing to God. What joyful event made up to Moses for the late manifestation of Divine displeasure?

MARY. A meeting with his brother Aaron. How glad they must have been to see each other once more!

MAMA. Yes, and how this meeting seems to have confirmed their mutual faith. They no longer hesitate, but Aaron, (who in addition to his eloquence, was, we are told, a man of weight among his nation, and married to the sister of the prince of Judah) calls together the people, and informs them of the gracious intentions of their God.

MARY. And only think! Mama! the "people believed" for once, "and bowed down their heads and worshipped."

MAMA. Strong indeed must have been the manifestation of Divine power which conquered

lity so rooted as theirs! And vigorous at
:icular time, the faith which enabled them
'orward to, and the brothers to embark in,
ndous a design, as the emancipation of a
of slaves and bondsmen from the thraldom
nost civilized and powerful nation then
—at the fiat of an "unknown God," and
ministry of a proscribed outlaw! The
ich had elapsed since Moses left Egypt,
rived him of every stay at the court of
ı, which could have counterbalanced these
ıtages. The King whose daughter had
him from the waters, was long since dead:
ncess herself no doubt gathered to her
regretting the vain cares bestowed on
) had so ill requited them. All this had
:rmitted, nay, ordained, to make it more
apparent that it was "of the Lord," and
d only, if his people should be at length
out "with a mighty hand, and an out-
d arm."

s pause with devout awe, my dear child,
hreshold of this supernatural history; and
s gladly unfolded to his people the "good
of approaching deliverance, let us com-
te with pious gratitude that freedom from
han Egyptian bondage, purchased for us
greater than Moses," even our Lord Jesus

MORNING THIRD.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters v. and vi.

MAMA. We have in these chapters, my dear Mary, a striking proof of the natural obduracy and impenitence of the human heart; as well as of the remorseless tyranny which a long course of unchecked power can give rise to—in the refusal of Pharaoh to comply with so modest a request as a three days' leave of absence to his bondmen for the purposes of solemn worship, and his insensibility to the awful judgments by which the petition was enforced. By whom was it presented to the Egyptian King?

MARY. By Moses and Aaron. You know God had sent them on purpose to Pharaoh.

MAMA. Yes, and in addition to this secret commission, which would perhaps have failed in procuring them audience of a heathen prince, Moses might plead his education in the palace, and Aaron was undoubtedly a chief man or elder;

and as such, a natural representative of his people. In whose name did they urge their request?

MARY. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go." Mama! how wickedly Pharaoh answered; "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

MAMA. You are shocked, and most naturally, my child, with these profane expressions, even in the mouth of a heathen prince. Are they never heard, think you, in our Christian country, or echoed within the sinful depths of an unrenewed heart?

MARY. Surely, Mama, no one in our times can pretend not to know God.

MAMA. No, Mary; but saving knowledge is, alas! very different from a simple acquiescence in His existence. "Who is the Lord?" is not the language of the "fool" alone, who hath "said in his heart there is no God;" but of the greater fool, who, knowing "that He is," can reconcile that knowledge with neglect of his commandments, indifference to his promises, and defiance of his threatenings. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" was the question of Pharaoh. It is that of every one among us by whom that voice, *daily heard, is not obeyed.* Let us lay this to heart when we feel inclined to wonder at

the revolting presumption of one, on whose ears it fell strangely, and for the first time. Can you fancy any reason why Moses in reply calls Jehovah the "God of the Hebrews?"

MARY. No, Mama.

MAMA. It was not the first time that His power over Egypt for good or evil, had thus been manifested. First, in His judgments on them during the sojourn in their land of Abraham and Isaac; and still more recently, in the wonderful deliverance from famine by means of Joseph, expressly acknowledged by the Pharaoh of that day to be the work of the one true God. But by the "new king" it seems that Joseph, and a greater than Joseph, were alike forgotten. By what argument did Moses and Aaron enforce their petition?

MARY. "Lest God should fall on them with pestilence and sword."

MAMA. Hereby indirectly reminding Pharaoh of His power to punish; though in the first instance neither miracle nor menace was made use of.

MARY. Mama, Pharaoh never even took notice of their request, but abused them for hindering the people. This was a great affront to God.

MAMA. Not greater, my dear, than the tacit forgetfulness of Him, and his requirements, in

ich thousands less excusable spend their lives. it did God overlook it in Pharaoh?

MARY. Oh! no.

MAMA. Neither will he in the case of the far s pardonable "despisers" of our day. How s the rage of the proud king's heart against d and his people manifested?

MARY. Oh! the poor creatures were made work ten times harder, and find straw for their n bricks. Mama! what became of all the icks which so many thousand people made ery day?

MAMA. On what part of the stupendous ildings, whose ruins cover the land of Egypt this day, the Israelites were employed, we ve no means of deciding. But it has pleased ovidence to keep entire, for countless ages, odigious erections of unburnt brick, called ramids, the use of which has never been certained, and which, as the work evidently of innumerable population, and monuments aprently of mere ostentation, may serve (if not e identical buildings here mentioned) at least make us acquainted with their exact materials d gigantic character. You have seen a drawg of them, I think.

MARY. Yes, Mama, in one of Papa's great oks of travels. He showed me the inside too,

and it was nothing but a little dark room that nobody could live in, after all this great trouble. What could it be for?

MAMA. The most natural conjecture, my dear, is, that they were sepulchral chambers; as the Egyptians were most scrupulous about any thing that could contribute to the preservation of their dead. Did you not see a mummy once at the Museum?

MARY. Oh, yes! a frightful, black, smoky-looking thing.

MAMA. Yet precisely such as the relics of the proud Kings of Egypt, who employed a whole nation to raise mountains of brick over their remains. But to what end? Their name and memory have alike perished, and the only use of the Pyramids is to recall to the Christian traveller the bondage of Israel and power of Jehovah! But to whom did the officers of the poor oppressed Israelites carry their complaints?

MARY. First to Pharaoh, and then to Moses and Aaron. And they reflected upon God, Mama, as if He had done them harm instead of good. That was very bad of them!

MAMA. I fear Moses was a sharer, and a more criminal one, in their unbelief, for he too spake "as one of the foolish ones," and "unadvisedly with his lips," before God. How prone is the

th of even His chosen messengers, to fail on
: first fiery trial which assails them! How was
: Lord pleased to confirm his promise to Mo-
ı?

MARY. He was to make Pharaoh let his
ople go, with a strong hand.

MAMA. And that he did! But it is to a
ange in the wording of His covenant with His
osen people, that I wished to direct your atten-
ın. Hitherto He had been known to them only
the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; hence-
th, under His newly revealed title of Jehovah,
: was, in the execution of His promises to
e people, to make manifest His glory to the
ıole world. What was to be the first pledge
this renewed covenant?

MARY. Giving them the land of Canaan.
hy is it called the land of their pilgrimage?

MAMA. Because they had been "strangers
d pilgrims" there at God's command, four hun-
:d years before it was made their own. So
:le was it their's in the days of Abraham, Isaac,
d Jacob, that tents were the only dwellings
ese mighty patriarchs lived in, as if to acknow-
lge the precarious nature of their present
ıure. But do you remember two strong marks
their faith that it was ultimately to be their
st?

MARY. No, Mama.

MAMA. Did not Abraham buy for a l sum, a burying-place there, for Sarah and al family? And do you not remember Joseph his death-bed, desiring his bones to be ca thither? Oh, Mary! would that every one looked forward with as steady and believin eye to the "rest that remaineth for the peop God," as Abraham from his tent, and Jo from his palace, contemplated the typical re Israel in the earthly Canaan! But we are by an Apostle that even *they* have left us an ample of looking beyond it to a "better cou even an heavenly." Let us beware "lest b evil heart of unbelief, we seem to fall short that ultimate "rest" of which Canaan was h type. Did the children of Israel open their h and ears to these reviving promises?

MARY. No, Mama, "for anguish of s and cruel bondage."

MAMA. Strange! that worldly sorrow sho as it sometimes does, shut the heart against l venly joy! thus defeating the blessed and gr ous end of Him "who afflicteth not willin nor grieveth the children of men." But your eye, Mary, over the genealogy which oc at this part of your chapter—do you remark thing in it?

MARY. Yes, Mama; what you told me yesterday. It tells all about Aaron and his family, but not a word of Moses or his; and you said it was on account of his strange wife.

MAMA. Nay, Mary, I only conjectured. The omission may have arisen merely from his being the younger son. It affords, at all events, conclusive evidence of the humility as well as veracity of Moses.

MARY. Mama, what does Moses mean by saying he was of "uncircumcised lips?"

MAMA. What was circumcision a sign of, Mary? Remember, it answered to our baptism.

MARY. Dedication to God, I suppose.

MAMA. Well; "uncircumcised," throughout the Bible, just means unprepared for his service. Jeremiah complains that the people's ears were "uncircumcised," so that they could not "hearken." Stephen calls them "uncircumcised both in ears and heart." A strong figure! and but too applicable to the unrenewed among us, whom the waters of baptism have failed to cleanse, or the vows then registered to bind in allegiance to their God.

But there is another lesson we also may draw from the uncircumcision of lips and heart of Moses and his countrymen. They were backward to believe, and slow in accepting the pro-

mised deliverance of their God. Dismayed by perils, disheartened by opposition, willing to submit to the vilest and most degrading bondage rather than risk the slight measure of ease and safety which an enemy's country afforded,—preferring (as they afterwards did in the wilderness) the "flesh-pots of Egypt," with all their accompaniments of toil and servitude and degradation, to emancipation and the free service of Jehovah.

Is it not so with us, Mary, when, with criminal supineness, or yet more criminal obstinacy, we shrink from the difficulties of a conflict with the world, in which the same Almighty arm is pledged to support us, and the issue of which is the far more "glorious liberty of the sons of God?"

MORNING FOURTH.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapers vii. and viii.

MAMA. We had already gathered, my dear Mary, from former chapters, that pride and presumption were the predominant features in the character of Pharaoh. This day's reading has exhibited their influence as capable of hardening him against the most sensible evidences of the superior power and majesty of the unknown God, with whom he vainly sought to strive. There is something frightful, and at the same time deeply instructive, in the congeniality of this besetting sin of pride to the nature of man, and the tenacity with which he clings to it at the expense of his happiness, his safety, nay, his immortal soul. Pride lost the angels Heaven, and our first parents paradise. It cost Pharaoh the devastation of his kingdom, and life of his first-born. Nebuchadnezzar sacrificed to its gratification his throne and reason; and many, many a proud nominal *Christian*, by refusing, like Pha-

raoh, to "let go" something which God hath commanded him to relinquish, forfeits peace upon earth, and immortality beyond it. By what encouraging expressions does God, in the beginning of our chapter, revive the drooping spirit of Moses?

MARY. "See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron shall be thy prophet." How could Moses be a God, Mama? There is none but one.

MAMA. True: it is only a strong figure of speech to express the extent of delegated power with which this eminent servant of the Most High was to be intrusted.

MARY. Mama, if God was to harden Pharaoh's heart on purpose, how could he help being wicked? I thought God hardened nobody.

MAMA. I am glad you have put this question, my dear; it shews you think of what you read, and enables me to explain a phrase which has puzzled older heads than your's. No person is ever otherwise "hardened" by the most merciful and forbearing of Beings, than by mere cessation of divine interposition when become manifestly incorrigible,—a state of reluctant abandonment to obstinate depravity, expressed in Scripture by being "given up to a reprobate mind." The best commentators tell us we have no authority

from the original for ascribing to God any hardening of Pharaoh's naturally stubborn disposition, till we come to the 9th chapter and 12th verse, when he had so decidedly and unpardonably resisted innumerable warnings, as to be judicially abandoned (with a propriety none but the most idle caviller could question) to the consequences of his impenitence and his impiety. This God foresaw would be the case, and prepared Moses for it accordingly; and thus only are we to understand his "heart being hardened" by Him, who "willeth not the death of" the most determined rebel, "but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live." We may gather from the passage that another important end, besides the triumphant rescue of Israel, was in the view of Jehovah in the impending judgments. What does He say at verse 5th?

MARY. "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt."

MAMA. Yes, my dear Mary; and such are not his designs upon idolatrous Egypt alone. His "hand" is never "stretched out" on any people or individual among us, but that we may know, and fear, and acknowledge Him. Oh! that when we see in national visitations or private

calamities evident tokens of his outstretched arm, we would say and feel—"The Lord reigneth."

But to return to Moses—What age was he, when finally deputed on his perilous mission?

MARY. Fourscore, and Aaron was three years older. What old men!

MAMA. You must remember, my dear, that human life, though greatly diminished since the antediluvian, or even patriarchal ages, was still prolonged to a duration unknown among us. Moses was an hundred and twenty years old, when he died; at eighty he was therefore probably not more infirm than persons of fifty or sixty in our days. What was the first miracle he was empowered to perform?

MARY. Oh! the old one at the burning bush—turning his rod into a serpent. But, Mama, how came it that the Egyptian magicians could do the same? Did God let them?

MAMA. Doubtless he must, if indeed the miracle was ever really wrought by them. But this is much and justly questioned by the best commentators, because the word translated "enchantments," seems more properly to imply slight of hand, or legerdemain, for which the Egyptians were famous, and especially for taming serpents; some of which, previously prepared, it was by

s difficult for such expert conjurors to
e in the place of their rods. But if
d really to imitate Moses, it could only
raw them on by temporary success to
ling exposure of subsequent inferiori-
:h indeed was already intimated by Mo-
swallowing their's. This having failed
ice Pharaoh—what was selected for the
'the next miracle?

. The "river," Mama. The Nile, you
: said it must be.

.. Yes, the sole river of Egypt; a coun-
:h, denied by Providence the natural re-
t of rain, owed its whole fertility, or power
cing food for man, to a periodical rise
Nile, and the abundant irrigation thus
to its thirsty soil. Why did we say the
ughter was visiting it when she found

. For idolatrous worship of it; and so,
:, was Pharaoh now.

. Yes, and therefore no fitter scene or
could be devised for manifesting to this
nce the superiority of the God whom
espised by asking, "Who is the Lord?"
this impious question answered by Je-

"In this shalt thou know that I am

the Lord; I will smite the waters that are in thy river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink, and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the waters of the river." How disgusting, Mama!

MAMA. Yes, Mary, even to you and I, how much more so to the nice and delicate Egyptians, who abhorred the very idea of blood, and revolted so from putrefaction as to embalm the bodies even of birds and animals; who looked then, and by the testimony of modern travellers still do, on the hallowed waters of the Nile with superstitious veneration, and held its fishes to be deities, or at least symbols, too sacred for food! What must have been *their* feelings when they saw their tutelary river thus defiled, their domestic reservoirs polluted, and themselves almost poisoned by their corrupted gods! Nothing more distinctly marks the "finger of God" in these judgments than their correspondence with the sins, and startling opposition to the rites of this most idolatrous of nations. It seems as if the magicians were again enabled, by some optical delusion or divine permission, to imitate this miracle also. If the latter, it was a singular instance of what our Lord calls a "house divided against itself," if the power of evil spirits was

thus overruled to join in afflicting the despisers of Jehovah. How long did the plague of blood last?

MARY. Seven days, Mama. A long time I should think.

MAMA. Long, indeed, Mary, in a hot country like Egypt, and sufficient, almost without a fresh miracle, to bring on the disease and pestilence which followed. What was the next judgment threatened on this devoted people?

MARY. The plague of frogs, Mama.

MAMA. Before proceeding to consider it, let us notice a circumstance manifestly inconsistent with the painful idea of a desire on God's part to "harden" Pharaoh; while it is quite in character with all we know of him who is ever saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" I mean the previous intimation graciously given of almost every impending plague, to afford the king of Egypt an opportunity to repent and escape it. I do not think this is sufficiently attended to by those who rashly charge that God who "tempteth no man," with the guilt of Pharaoh's sin.

MARY. I think, Mama, the plague of frogs was almost as bad as the other. The idea of having one's house full of such creatures, makes one's flesh creep!

MAMA. Yes, and again the evil was made to

arise from the sacred river, and to bring upon the Egyptians their special abomination of animal putridity. But was it at all likely for frogs, even if thus abundant, to come out of their natural element, and spread themselves in cities and houses?

MARY. Oh! no. God must have changed their very nature before they could do so. I wonder this did not convince Pharaoh!

MAMA. It did, Mary, while the infection lasted; you must have overlooked his momentary penitence. He promised, if the frogs were removed, to let the people go, and Moses, in the true forbearing spirit of the God whom he served, complied with his abject entreaties; after precisely naming a time, that chance might be seen to have no share in the wished-for relief. Did Pharaoh, on his part, adhere to the agreement?

MARY. Oh! no; "when he saw that there was respite he hardened his heart."

MAMA. Yes, that heart which God had done so much to soften, but had foreseen would be wrought on in vain! This time warning seems to have been withheld as superfluous; the plague of lice, subtle, noiseless, yet irresistible, came unannounced.

MARY. And this time, Mama, the magicians "could do nothing," but told Pharaoh it was the "*finger* of God."

MAMA. This corroborates our opinion, that their former attempts were mere deceptions. Serpents and blood and frogs were all tangible things, and might be *brought* to aid in deceiving the spectators. But over the "dust of the earth," or the air in which it floated, the sorcerers of Egypt could have no power; while its proud and effeminate priesthood groaned under an infliction more loathsome to them than even to us. Did Pharaoh listen to the warnings of his own baffled magicians?

MARY. No, no; it was just the same as ever. So the Lord sent "swarms of flies" next to punish his obstinacy. Mama! it occurs to me this might have something to do with the "King of Flies," the false god you told me many nations worshipped under the name of Baalzebub.

MAMA. Very well remembered indeed, my dear. But the Egyptian superstition was more abject and degrading still; for they worshipped the insects themselves! and it is expressly said, the whole idolatry connected with them originated in Egypt, probably from its vicinity to Ethiopia and Nubia; the countries travellers tell us, most naturally exposed to the scourge here inflicted upon Egypt. Was it general over the whole land?

MARY. No, the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was free.

MAMA. A most wonderful distinction! when we consider that it lay *between* two parts of Egypt both afflicted by the flies; and still more when we are told by Bruce and other travellers that the exemption of that favoured pastoral region continues to this day, affording a resource to the tortured cattle of neighbouring districts. What effect had this judgment on Pharaoh?

MARY. He came down a little, and said the Israelites might worship their God where they were.

MAMA. And what did Moses object to this?

MARY. That they could not "sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes."

MAMA. Meaning thereby, sheep, goats, and, above all, oxen, all of which, the latter especially, were in some way or other, held sacred by the Egyptians. But here let us stop, Mary, to notice a wonderful circumstance, not often considered by casual readers. How miraculously had the idea of animal sacrifice, as acceptable to Jehovah, been kept up for four hundred years among a nation, who evidently had for most of that time been forced by tyranny to relinquish it! Many people are apt to look upon sacrifices as first in-

troduced as a regular part of worship by Moses, forgetting that they are coeval with man's fall, the express institution of God, and indissolubly connected, in the whole Old Testament history, with the future economy of redemption. Of this we have a strong proof in the indelible memory of them impressed upon the enslaved Israelites, and their determined resolution to resume them at the first moment of emancipation. Where did Moses now propose doing so?

MARY. "Three days' journey in the wilderness;" not to give offence to the Egyptians. I suppose it was an excuse to get away altogether.

MAMA. So Pharaoh seems to have regarded it; for the moment the flies were dispersed at his entreaty, he "refused to let the people go."

The length of this day's reading, my dear, leaves room for little application, indeed we have made it as we went along. Humility, a deep sense of the depravity of man and majesty of God, is the chief lesson of this eventful history. Let us beware lest we also harden our hearts against the judgments yet abroad in the world; and remember that the end of all chastisement is to rescue us, like Israel of old, from idolatry, and bondage, and death.

MORNING FIFTH.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters ix. and x.

MAMA. Methinks, my dear Mary, there is something doubly appropriate in the signal judgment with which our chapter commences; first, to the prevailing superstition of Egypt, and next, to the insolent refusal of its king to permit animal sacrifices in honour of Jehovah, even of the cattle which belonged individually to the Israelites. As if it were to mark this, as well as to aim a death-blow at that idolatrous worship, of the ox tribe especially, (of which Israel in the desert, in the matter of the golden calf, retained but too faithful a memory,) it is on the *cattle* of Egypt that the outstretched arm of the Lord is now made to fall; while, as in a former instance, the flocks and herds of the Israelites, their chief present possession, and future provision for the service of their God in the wilderness, are miraculously exempted from the prevailing epidemic.

MARY. How good it was of God to give Pharaoh once more a day to think better of it! I thought He had given up warning him!

MAMA. And so would any outraged human superior long ago, Mary! but the "compassions of the Lord are infinite," extending, as he would have those of his creatures to do, unto "seventy times seven." Did this forbearance prove more efficacious than usual?

MARY. No; less so, I think; for Pharaoh never even pretended to relent, though he sent into Goshen to see if the cattle were really alive.

MAMA. How were he and his people now punished in the tenderest point?

MARY. Moses threw up handfuls of the dust of the furnace, and it brought "boils" upon every body, magicians and all.

MAMA. Surely, Mary, one would have thought this personal infliction infallible. Do you remember a case where it was pronounced so by one, who (in a very opposite sense from our gracious Lord) "knew what was in man," and whose object in inflicting it was not to bring honour, but blasphemy on the name of God?

MARY. I can't think what you mean, Mama.

MAMA. Oh! it is only a casual coincidence suggested to me by the similarity of the disease of Pharaoh and his subjects, to the "sore boils" with which Satan was permitted, for a very different purpose, to put the climax to the afflictions of Job. In both cases this ultimate attack on

that tenderest possession of man, his body, proved ineffectual. Job "in all this, sinned not with his lips," while Pharaoh, continuing insensible, was now at length judicially confirmed in his incorrigible impenitence.

MARY. Had this plague any thing to do with the idolatry of Egypt?

MAMA. The scattering of the ashes has been supposed to refer to a similar practice at the close of the human sacrifices, which (in spite of their sickly sensibility on the subject of animal life) they offered in honour of their God Typhon; while the learned have also discovered appropriateness in the air, one of the Egyptian deities, being made, as well as water, an instrument in their punishment. Who are mentioned here as included in its distressing effects?

MARY. The magicians, Mama, "they could not stand before Moses, because of the boil."

MAMA. Did you observe, as you went along, any aggravation of Pharaoh's guilt, which probably moved God at length to give him up "to his heart's lust, and the fruit of his own ways?"

MARY. I don't know, unless it was his having twice promised to "let the people go," and drawn back.

MAMA. Just so; not content with defying, "Satan had put it into his heart to lie unto the

Lord." Do you recollect to whom these words were addressed in the New Testament, and the dreadful judgments which followed?

MARY. Yes, you mean Ananias and Sapphira, who were both struck dead for their lie.

MAMA. Very well; and in the following verses of our chapter the Lord tells Pharaoh (according to the best explanations we have of rather an obscurely rendered passage) that though He could at once have smitten him with pestilence, and cut him off from the earth for his audacious breach of faith with the Most High; yet for this cause had he "*made him stand*," or preserved him, (not "raised him up," as translated in our Bibles, whence some have drawn the false and impious conclusion, that he was created for the purpose of sinning) that the power of Jehovah might be magnified in the awful catastrophe by which this monument of Divine vengeance should justly and finally perish.

MARY. How very good it was of God to give notice of the hail! I suppose it was not meant for wicked Pharaoh, but for those believing Egyptians who took warning by it.

MAMA. Doubtless; yet nothing but experience of former judgments could have made even such believe it. Why so? Why was it so peculiarly incredible?

MARY. Because there never was any natural rain in Egypt, you told me. Is that the reason you meant?

MAMA. Exactly; I wished to see if you remembered it. Nothing but the miraculous power of God could have produced a phenomenon totally unknown in that country, and still more so as combined with hail, which its dry sultry atmosphere utterly precluded. The mingling of "fire" with these strange visitations must have added greatly to their destructive effect and awful character. Do you see any special propriety in this addition?

MARY. Water and air had been made to punish the Egyptians already, perhaps they worshipped fire also.

MAMA. They did, Mary, and I am glad you understood this desecration of another of their elemental deities. Did the Israelites suffer from this great storm?

MARY. Oh! no. "There was no hail in Goshen."

MAMA. My dear Mary, let this simple phrase remind us of a precious spiritual truth. The word "Goshen" is often applied to the "city of refuge," enjoyed in this world of storms by God's chosen and peculiar servants; who, though not like the Israelites exempted from their share

ıoral calamities, experience nevertheless
the shadow of the Most High," a sense of
nd tranquillity amid them, which neither
ings" of the world's impotent malice, nor
ail" of its undisguised fury, nor the
ence" of its evil examples, nor the "thick
s" of its wilful ignorance, can penetrate or
proach. The Israelites in Goshen doubt-
deep gratitude for the miraculous pro-
vouchsafed them by their God. How
nore should we bless His holy name if,
ower greatly beyond our own strength,
, (while sojourners in a world lying in
ness), in fulfilment of our Saviour's gra-
etition, "kept from the evil that is in it!"

ıY. Mama, the hail must have been very
ıl, when it made Pharaoh own he and his
were wicked!

ıA. And he more wicked than even con-
pronounced him, so soon to retract a
ion, the fruit, indeed, not of penitence, but
of slavish terror! Have you any notion
flax and barley are particularly mention-
estroyed by the hail?

ıY. No, Mama. I should have thought
eat of more consequence.

ıA. In the worship of the country the

flax at least had a peculiar utility. It was celebrated all over the world for its quality; and in the "fine linen" woven from it, the priests were exclusively clothed. To them the loss of a year's growth must have been peculiarly annoying. From barley it is supposed they made a fermented liquor essential to their health and comfort at those seasons when the Nile was undrinkable. But the destruction of the later sorts of grain was only deferred, and left to another class of God's ministers of vengeance. By the locusts was Pharaoh's mock penitence signally avenged, and the devastation of the land completed. But before following them in their ravages, let us remark a further and merciful purpose announced by Jehovah to Moses, in the extension of Pharaoh's life; and the multiplication of judgments no longer designed for his amendment. See if you can find this purpose for me.

MARY. "That thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son and thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, that ye may know that I am the Lord."

MAMA. Very well. Do you know any Jewish writer besides Moses, by whom the gracious office of reminding his people of those mighty works has been faithfully discharged? Whose

eloquent description of the "signs and wonders in the land of Ham," have you often (perhaps without due attention) repeated?

MARY. I think, Mama, David uses these words in a Psalm all about the children of Israel in Egypt.

MAMA. Yes, in a most faithful as well as succinct recapitulation of the history of his people contained in the 105th and 106th Psalms; ushered in and summed up, in the truly pious spirit of its author, by earnest exhortations to praise and thanksgiving. Let us join with him, Mary, in exclaiming, when we read of similar displays of Almighty power, "Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men!" But what "Israelites indeed" recalled in later times, still for the benefit of their countrymen and our own, the deliverance from Egypt, and transactions in the wilderness?

MARY. I don't remember.

MAMA. Stephen in the Acts, and St. Paul in the Hebrews, allude to them as things perfectly well known, and impressed on the hearts and memories of their countrymen, even at that remote period. So completely had the "sons and sons' sons" of the generation who witnessed them, participated in the knowledge thus gra-

ciously provided by God! But by the Jews we fear these signal favours were perverted into sources of carnal pride, and vain-glorious exultation. They forgot the wholesome addition, "That ye may know that I am the Lord," and attributed to their merits a course of national mercies, which Moses, on the contrary, perpetually wonders their national degeneracy had failed in forfeiting. But we must return to the locusts. I think I have explained to you their destructive character.

MARY. Yes, Mama, they are a sort of large grasshoppers which appear in clouds, and eat up every green thing that comes in their way.

MAMA. Very well remembered, but to heighten your general idea of this destructive insect, I will quote you the words of a modern traveller, an actual eye-witness. "Those I saw in Barbary were much bigger than common grasshoppers. In the heat of the day they formed themselves into large bodies, and darkened the very sun. On being hatched, the new broods immediately collected together, forming compact bodies of several hundred yards square, and marching directly forward, climbed over trees, walls, and houses, eat up every plant in their way, and let nothing escape them. The inhabitants made trenches and filled them with water, and set on

fire large quantities of combustibles. But in vain. The trenches were quickly filled up, and the fires put out, by infinite swarms succeeding each other; the last gnawing off the young branches and the very bark of such trees as had before escaped with the loss only of fruit and foliage."

MARY. Dreadful indeed! no wonder Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron "in haste," to rid him of such enemies.

MAMA. Yes, especially as from this scourge of other eastern countries, Egypt being protected by the barrier of the Red Sea, was usually exempt; yet in one day, "even by to-morrow," did the Lord "hiss for the fly" out of the remotest regions of Arabia; and locusts—such as never were known before or after—desolated the scanty remnant of vegetation this once fertile country yet boasted. These, as well as the frogs before mentioned, forsook their usual character, by infesting houses, thereby adding loathsomeness to calamity.

MARY. Mama, the servants of Pharaoh showed more sense than their master; they ventured to desire him to "let the people go."

MAMA. And by what miserable subterfuge did this infatuated prince think to mock God, and to compromise literally (the children of

Israel being a chief source of his wealth) between "God and Mammon?"

MARY. Only the men were to go and worship, leaving the women and children behind, to make sure of their coming back again: and when Moses would not accept this insolent proposal, he drove him away in anger. No wonder God sent the locusts on him immediately! But, Mama, I think it was simple in Moses always to believe Pharaoh serious, and entreat God for him.

MAMA. My dear, God has constituted no man judge of another's sincerity, nor have his ministers a right to withhold from the worst, the benefit of their finite intercession. Besides, others were sufferers equally with the infidel king in all these calamities; and the Lord, who "refrained" from destroying Nineveh on account of the "six score thousand persons in it who could not discern their right hand from their left"—was doubtless ready "to be entreated" for the helpless and unoffending among the Egyptians. There was now little more in the shape of property to be destroyed, and the next plague—a meet prelude to the crowning judgment which succeeded—was of a nature to work on the feelings and consciences of such as retained on their minds any sense of God. Darkness, deep, pal-

able, and supernatural, besides being a very proper humiliation to a people piquing themselves on their superior illumination, was a signal retribution on their idolatrous worship of the sun, and idle personification of a power of darkness, from which their tutelary deity of light was unable to rescue them.

MARY. It must have been dreadful to sit in darkness three whole days, not knowing what was to come next!

MAMA. Terrible indeed! Were the Israelites left thus unenlightened?

MARY. No, no; it says, "The children of Israel had light in their dwellings."

MAMA. Never forget this, Mary, or the cause of this exhilarating difference; which, as a foretaste of further mercies, must have been doubly reviving. If the Israelites had "light in their dwellings," while the Egyptians sat paralysed with horror under the influence of a "darkness that might be felt"—it was because the "candle of the Lord shined on their heads;" because that symbol of the Divine presence, already become to their enemies "a pillar of a cloud," displayed its joyful beacon to animate them for their journey. In the dwelling of every Christian, Mary, there is, or ought to be, the same heavenly light; dispelling the mists of error, the clouds of igno-

ance, the night of doubt and despondence—
"shining," like the path of those whom it g
and invigorates, "more and more unto the
fect day!"

MARY. Oh, Mama! Pharaoh could
think of making conditions with God, and l
ing the *cattle* of the Israelites from going
them. How weak as well as wicked he
have been!

MAMA. Wickedness is but another nam
folly, in most instances, my dear; and the l
has more share than is generally imagined i
errors of the understanding. Covetousness
at the bottom of Pharaoh's whole resistanc
the departure of God's people—and the mor
evitable his ultimate compliance became—
more did his "evil heart of unbelief" strugg
retain some hold over its unjust possess
Better kings and better men than Pharaoh n
have been loth to relinquish a nation of profit
slaves and tributaries; and let us, while ackn
ledging his impious infatuation, ask ourselv
we feel it easy to "count all things but loss
the command of even a gracious and liberal l
ter, who has promised to repay every such s
fice "an hundred fold?" With this salutary
humbling inquiry, let us pause, ere we follow
reprobate King of Egypt to his "house of mo

ıg" and watery grave. If we have thus far ac-
ɔmpanied the sacred historian without height-
ıed feelings of reverence for God, and deepened
ɜar of provoking his righteous judgments, it
ɜere better for us that Moses had never written,
-nay, that like Pharaoh—(to use our Lord's aw-
ıl words)—we "had been cast into the depths
f the sea."

MORNING SIXTH.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters xi. xii. and xiii. to ver. 1

MAMA. We have, my dear Mary, in th closely connected, and indeed inseparable ch ters, the three-fold record of the final and mer rable judgment by which Jehovah summed his " wonders upon Egypt," and its wicked r narch—the singular expedient by which its tension to the children of Israel was to be me fully averted—and the religious rite by wh this gracious deliverance was to be commer rated to the most distant periods of their ex ence as a nation. Interesting as the whole tra action was to the Jews, as a record of Divine v geance and memorial of Divine goodness—to Christians, who know what a far better and m glorious deliverance is here typified, it m open subjects of reflection and gratitude as m more elevated and sublime than theirs, as " Ch our Passover" transcends in spotlessness and

lue, the "lamb without blemish," selected for the outward symbol of redemption.

But before entering on this inexhaustible subject, let us notice that fulfilment of a temporal promise of God to Moses, with which our chapter commences. How were we to understand the "borrowing" from their neighbours of the gold and jewels which so greatly enriched the Israelites?

MARY. You said it meant *demanding*, and that the frightened Egyptians gave more than was asked, to get rid of the Israelites.

MAMA. Exactly; and what is here predicted of their being "thrust out," was wonderfully fulfilled, when, in the middle of the night the distracted monarch entreats his long-detained vassals to "Rise up and get forth." By what last plague was this sudden revolution to be brought about?

MARY. All the first-born of Egypt were to die; "from the first-born of Pharaoh on the throne, to the first-born of the maid-servant behind the mill." What does that mean, Mama?

MAMA. In those primitive times (nay, to this day in the same eastern countries) the corn used is chiefly ground by handmills, worked by slaves or female servants, sitting on the ground with the mill (a sort of stone-trough or bowl) in their

lap; a tedious expensive process, which we, wl have made wind, and water, and steam obedie to our enlarged faculties and wants, can hard conceive. But that it will likely exist somewhe till the end of the world, we may gather from remarkable verse in the New Testament. Hc does our Lord allude to it when speaking some mysterious separation which shall then ta place?

MARY. I don't remember.

MAMA. "Two women shall be grinding the mill—the one shall be taken, and the oth left." But what strong expression is here us to mark the dreadful effect on the Egyptians the impending judgment?

MARY. "There shall be a *great cry* throug out all the land of Egypt."

MAMA. This, which would be very applical to such universal bereavement anywhere, w peculiarly so to the Egyptians, who of all peo were the most frantic and clamorous in th grief for the dead. Any one who has read t account of the funeral wailings of Eastern natic to this day, when the death of a single individ is bemoaned by his friends, (assisted by hir mourners) with the most lamentable shrieks a howlings—may figure what must have been t shrill horror of that "cry" which rose from thc

sands of distracted bosoms in the disastrous night when every house in Egypt was made childless; when the splendour of the palace and darkness of the dungeon were alike "called by the Lord God of Hosts to weeping and mourning." But was it so among the children of Israel?

MARY. Oh! no, Mama.

MAMA. And why?

MARY. "That Pharaoh might know God did put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

MAMA. Attend to this expression, Mary. It was God that *put* the difference, as he does every other. No merit of Israel over Egypt entitled the former people to exemption from the coming evil; and to make this plain beyond mistake, God was pleased to appoint a simple and apparently inefficacious observance, by which *alone* (as signifying the obedience of faith) the *believing* households of Israel could be distinguished from those of impenitent Egypt. Had the single circumstance of birth and nation saved the first-born of Israel, the arrogant boastings of that prejudiced people might to this day have found an excuse. But on the "blood of sprinkling," then as now, was made to rest their whole assurance of safety, that all might know that on Christ alone, the

Jew, as well as Gentile, must build his hope of acceptance.

But let us inquire into the precise nature of this type or symbol of Messiah slain for the whole world. What were the Israelites to sacrifice?

MARY. "A lamb without blemish, a male of the first year."

MAMA. Here, as in most Jewish rites, we have two striking particulars of opposition to heathen superstitions. Lambs among the Egyptians were objects of worship, not victims; and males were reverenced, so that if ever they did offer animal sacrifices, females were, on that account, made use of. The minute directions about eating the lamb, were equally at variance with pagan customs. The flesh was to be roasted, not seethed in cauldrons, or even partially partaken of raw, as in some heathen rites—the "purtenance," or entrails, were to be consumed or burnt, not reserved, (as was done by the idol priests) for purposes of divination; not a bone was to be broken: and if the exact bearing of this injunction on forbidden rites remain uncertain, its remarkable fulfilment on the cross must ever give it reverence in our eyes. But it is in the *blood* our chief interest—the interest we share

with past ages, and generations unborn—deeply lies; and no one who reads in faith and humility the account of the "sprinkling" here enjoined upon the Israelites, but *must* see its wonderful analogy with the blood shed on Calvary "for the sins of many;" whose application, and whose *individual* application alone, can turn away from the households of our own day the execution of the universal sentence gone out against their race.

MARY. Mama! I wonder why God said he would "see the blood, and pass over." Did he not know who were Israelites, or his servants, as well without it?

MAMA. Who were Israelites by birth he certainly might, my dear—though "all are not Israel who are so according to the flesh," says one of the greatest of human authorities. But it was precisely to ascertain by this test who were his servants indeed, that the Lord was pleased to appoint it. Had any Israelite, trusting in his descent from Abraham, omitted to sprinkle the blood on his door,—think you his first-born would have been spared?

MARY. Oh! no, Mama.

MAMA. And why?

MARY. Because he would have disobeyed God.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, and in the most offensive

way, by disbelieving him. Let us draw deep instruction from this solemn, and to us doubly significant ceremony! If God appointed this rite, and *no other*, for preserving the temporal life of the first-born of Israel—and if we know on Divine testimony, that Christ our Passover "is slain for us, and that by his blood alone, we have peace with God"—is there from reason or probability the slightest ground for supposing that any other means, however plausible, can save from eternal death those who "despise so great salvation?" We should justly charge with folly any Hebrew, who by refusing to sprinkle the blood of the lamb on his door-posts, lost his darling son. Oh! remember, my child, this loss will be as nothing to the nominal Christian's, whose robes are not "washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb," and who hath "counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he" *might have been sanctified* "an unholy thing!"

There is another remarkable particular contained in the Divine injunction, which may serve to enhance the awful sanctity of the "blood of sprinkling." No Israelite was to go beyond the shelter of the threshold thus mysteriously hallowed, till the morning; till the destroying angel's mission was fully accomplished, and a new day had dawned on a night of wrath and vengeance.

Does not this warn every Christian to abide closely within the "ark of refuge" provided for him by his God in a world of peril and temptation, till the "last enemy shall be destroyed," and "the Sun of Righteousness be risen with healing under his wings?"

But the Passover having been sacrificed—by what further emblems are the insecurity and precariousness, and passing nature of man's condition on earth, here shadowed forth? How were the Israelites to eat their Passover?

MARY. "With bitter herbs, Mama, and with unleavened bread—with their loins girded, and shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand," like people going on a journey.

MAMA. And so they were, Mary, and so are we; strangers and pilgrims like them in an unknown wilderness, where none of us can say what a day may bring forth, where the next night our heads may be laid, or from what quarter the whirlwind of the desert may rise and blast our fondest earthly hopes! But, like them, we have God for our guide and guardian; and if, like them, we leave the bondage of Egypt behind us, and look forward to the heavenly Canaan, sure we are, that through all the stages of our pilgrimage, yea, even in the dark valley which forms its

mortal boundary—"His rod and staff" will be withheld.

But, my dear Mary, let us notice one grac purpose among many, which the *perpetual* servance of the Passover was designed to se What says verse 25th of the 13th chapter?

MARY. "When your children shall say u you, What mean ye by this service? Ye s say, it is the Lord's passover."

MAMA. This is not the first time, my d we have had to remark a condescending re to the instruction of the young, in the cou of Him who said "suffer little children to c unto me." Are not such ungrateful in the treme, if by inattention or levity they mak ineffectual? You are indignant, and justl at Pharaoh for striving to defeat God's pur Have you ever thought you could be a shar his sin by disregarding its punishment? V child of promise was initiated at twelve year in the important rite of the Passover?

MARY. Our blessed Lord, Mama.

MAMA. Yes, Mary—the very Divine o of this ancient rite condescended to hallow i his presence, thus—for an example to the y of all ages—"fulfilling all righteousness."

We have now seen the accomplishmen God's dreadful threat on the Egyptians—V

fect had universal calamity on the hitherto ubborn monarch?

MARY. He besought Moses and Aaron to go way immediately, and the people begged them o, saying, "we be all dead men."

MAMA. How long had Israel sojourned in gypt?

MARY. "Four hundred and thirty years" it ays here, but I thought you said only two hunred and sixty.

MAMA. Very well remembered. The sacred istorian here includes all the time which had lapsed from the call of Abraham; nearly half of which was spent in Canaan, where, as well as in Egypt, he and his posterity were, we know, strangers and sojourners." To what numbers oes the 37th verse say they had increased in hat period?

MARY. Six hundred thousand men, besides hildren.

MAMA. A prodigious increase, (as we remarked) of the "seventy souls" that came in with acob. And what is said respecting the manner n which this enormous multitude left Egypt?

MARY. "All the hosts of the Lord" went out from the land of Egypt.

MAMA. This seems to imply, that notwithstanding the haste which the panic of their ene-

mies occasioned, the chosen people of God marched forth under his banner with the regularity of a well-ordered army. Indeed, this is confirmed by the subsequent accounts of their discipline and encampments. What further injunction have we, in the 13th chapter, commemorative of the deliverance of the first-born, when the people should be settled in Canaan?

MARY. All the first-born of men and beasts were to continue holy to God, and be his for ever.

MAMA. Did every parent then literally dedicate his eldest son to God's immediate service, as we know was the case with pious Hannah?

MARY. No, they might redeem them. You know, Mama, our Lord's mother brought two turtle doves in place of him.

MAMA. Not exactly in place of him, my dear, (though your answer is a proof of attention,) but rather as a permitted and grateful acknowledgment of that later ordinance of a God of mercy, by which he was pleased to sanctify to himself the children of Levi, as a substitute for all the first-born of the other tribes.

Nothing is more remarkable in the whole transaction than God's regard to perpetuate (among the young especially,) its important design. Do you know how the gross and carnal

Jews perverted, by a literal interpretation, the order to "*shew their sons* these things, and wear them for a sign upon their hand and a memorial between their eyes?"

MARY. I don't know, Mama.

MAMA. They wrote the *words of this very chapter* on little rolls of parchment called "phylacteries," and bound them like charms on their wrists and foreheads; not aware that it was on their *heart* that God had promised to "write all his laws." Inferior, however, as were these outward symbols to inward piety, (as was seen in the case of the Pharisees, who made great use of them,) they may rebuke those among us who, by despising external memorials of their spiritual deliverance, give too much reason to doubt their value for its inward effects.

With this remark let us end our present lesson, enforcing it by the words of our blessed Lord; who, (speaking of the minor observances of the Mosaic ritual, as opposed to its "weightier matters" of "judgment and mercy,") hath said, "these ought ye to have done, but not to leave the other undone." Remember the use of *all* religious observances is either to testify that the heart is already right with God, or as the appointed means of enabling it to become so. Instead of writing, (like the superstitious Jews,)

the fundamental doctrines of our faith on
able scraps of parchment, let us pray God
grave them on our inmost souls, not " 1
broad," like the Pharisees, these externa
ments of a sanctified profession, but dis
in our lives the only true evidence of our
ual deliverance, even living faith and r
obedience.

MORNING SEVENTH.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters xiii. (from v. 17), xiv. and xv.

MAMA. Numerous, my dear Mary, as are the instances of divine vengeance on despisers of God, recorded for our instruction in the Bible, I know of none more striking and terrible than the subjects of this day's lesson. We have seen nearly all the powers of nature wielded in vain by him who is their author, for the chastisement and humiliation of Pharaoh, and are now called upon to behold with awe, on the margin of the Red Sea, the God by whom alone "its proud waves could be stayed," withholding his retaining hand, and burying in their fathomless depths the enemies of himself and his people. These things, Mary, were recorded for our edification. The "red right arm of the Lord," though no longer "made bare" as of old to our wondering senses, is not shortened, that it cannot either

save or punish with the same resistless energy; and the sea which rolled its closing billows over Pharaoh and his host, is but a faint emblem of that abyss of "destruction from the face of the Lord and his anointed," which awaits the ungodly at the latter day.

But let us turn to the more encouraging features of this awful narration. What kind condescension in God to the fears of a newly emancipated race of slaves, do we find in the close of the 13th chapter!

MARY. He would not lead the people the near way by the land of the Philistines, "lest they should see war and be afraid," but through the wilderness of the Red Sea. Why was it called "Red," Mama?

MAMA. The most likely explanation is, that as it was called sea of Edom, and that word in Hebrew signifies also "red," the Greeks thus translated it, not knowing it to be a proper name. Its ancient Hebrew name was the "sea of weeds," perhaps from its profusion of coral, long mistaken for a vegetable production.

MARY. How broad was it where the Israelites crossed?

MAMA. About twelve miles, it is supposed, and the spot is so ascertained by constant tradition, as well as by the names of places, (expres-

sive of local situation), recorded by Moses, that there can be little doubt respecting it. The name, "*Pihahiroth*," meaning the "mouth of the ridge," identifies it with an opening in the great chain of mountains that line the western coast. So far we have the direct authority of Scripture, and it is very pleasing to the Christian who visits the memorable scene, to have it corroborated by native traditions, and the remarkable Arab names of "Attaca," or deliverance, the "cape of Moses," "the springs and bay of Pharaoh;" while the whole gulf bears the awfully significant title to this day of "Bahr el Kolsum," the Bay of Submersion.

But before proceeding to the passage, what did the Israelites carry up with them from Egypt, in testimony of their own faith and that of others?

MARY. The bones of Joseph, who had expressly ordered it.

MAMA. And under what gracious symbol was the Lord of Hosts pleased to manifest himself as the guardian and guide of his people?

MARY. In a pillar of cloud by day, to shew them the way, and a pillar of fire by night, to give them light. How kind this was of God, Mama!

MAMA. Yes, Mary, these manifestations must

have been cheering in an unknown wilderness to a timid and bewildered people. But let us never forget, that like them we have by day and by night, in our journey through life, a beacon no less friendly and immutable, in the word of Him who cannot err, and the promises of Him who cannot lie. With the one to direct and the other to animate our footsteps, whose fault will it be, think you, if like the greater part of the Israelites, we wander out our sinful lives in this world's wilderness, without advancing one step towards the heavenly Canaan?

But to return to the Israelites. Their heavenly guide now conducted them, (as He frequently does ourselves), by movements the most contrary to human policy and expediency, to a perilous and seemingly hopeless position, between the sea on one hand and lofty desert mountains on the other. Instead of leading them round the head of the Red sea, they were made to coast it for near twenty miles, and encamp over against "Baal Zephon," supposed from its name to be a place of idol worship for mariners, and therefore peculiarly appropriate for the triumph of Jehovah. But how had the departure of the Israelites and relief from present calamity affected Pharaoh?

MARY. Oh! he repented having let them

go, and reflected on himself for having done it, and pursued them with all his people and six hundred chariots. What kind of chariots, Mama?

MAMA. War chariots, Mary, of which we read frequently in the Bible and other ancient histories. They were very formidable instruments of destruction, being often armed with scythes and other sharp weapons, by which, in addition to the fighting men they carried, they mowed down whole ranks of the enemy. But did they in this instance serve Pharaoh against a people utterly unprovided with the means of defence? No. Well might David say at an after period, "We will not put our trust in chariots or in horses, but in the Lord our God;" when the mixed and unarmed multitude which came out of Egypt witnessed the defeat of Pharaoh and all his chariots! But had that faint-hearted people at the ime derived confidence from their late signal deiverance and Jehovah's visible presence?

MARY. No, Mama. "They were sore afraid," ıd reproached Moses for bringing them to die the wilderness. I wonder God did not just : them do so.

MAMA. And so He might, Mary, if, (as you ·ays seem inclined to infer) *their* merits or r exaltation had any thing to do with God's lication of his own honour, and of His cove-

nant with their ancestors. So anxious seems Moses to have been to exclude them from all share in the glorious catastrophe, that with a sublimity of confidence in the Most High which has never been surpassed, he bids them merely "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." And by what apparently insignificant instrument was this great deliverance accomplished?

MARY. By the rod of Moses, Mama. He was to lift it up, and divide the sea, and the people were to go through on dry ground.

MAMA. What proof have we in the next verse that God's main design was more than the mere escape of the Israelites?

MARY. The "Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon his chariots, and his horsemen."

MAMA. By what remarkable change in the Divine Presence, or "Shechinah," were the Israelites encouraged, and their enemies bewildered?

MARY. The "Pillar of Cloud" left the front and went behind, between the two armies; giving light to Israel, and darkness to the Egyptians.

MAMA. A distinction still to be found in the world, Mary, relative to the Gospel, between

those who receive, and those who despise it; to the former a savour and foretaste of life, to the latter, of condemnation. How dreadful must have been the apprehensions of the presumptuous Pharaoh and his host, when involved past extrication in the returning billows, "the Lord looked out upon them from the pillar of fire and cloud, and troubled them!" Mary! let Him never have cause so to look upon us, when walking through the yet deeper waters which lie between every one of us and the promised land; waters which the "rod and staff" of the Almighty can alone enable any child of mortality to pass untroubled and unhurt. In vain did the Egyptians, entangled among rashly encountered perils, seek rescue in flight—in vain too late acknowledge that God fought against them. He who shall "mock" at all who forget God "when their fear cometh," laughed them to scorn; his billows went over them, "the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea."

MARY. Mama! perhaps it was because of their drowning the Israelites' children, that God punished them so.

MAMA. Possibly, my dear; for although we have no authority for saying so in this case, there is often a mysterious correspondence between guilt and punishment. I am glad it occurred to

you. But leaving the incorrigible hosts of Egypt to their fate, how did this miraculous deliverance affect the children of Israel?

MARY. "When the people saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, they feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

MAMA. Let it be so with us, Mary, when we see its record in the sacred volume, and let us not dwell alone on the power and goodness then displayed, but on the far more glorious deliverance we ourselves have experienced. For us also hath a way been opened across the pathless gulf which divided us from God and heaven—before us has the same "angel of the covenant" trode its unfathomable depths, and braved its raging billows. It has closed in awful judgment on His and our enemies—should not its shores, like those of the Red Sea of old, echo with the songs of the "ransomed of the Lord?" Remember, my dear Mary, when you read and admire (as infidels and scoffers themselves have been constrained to do) that sublimest of inspired hymns, the "Song of Moses" on the destruction of Pharaoh, that there is not a note of praise and thanksgiving in it, which may not breathe a holier and more heartfelt meaning, on the lips of an heir of Christian salvation! If his Lord was magnified on Pharaoh

and his host, how much greater the triumph over the powers of darkness achieved at the crucifixion? If it was rescue worthy of "everlasting remembrance" to walk unhurt the waves of the Red Sea, where the Egyptian blasphemer and his legions "sank like lead in the mighty waters!" is not escape from the bottomless pit, "reserved for the devil and his angels," more wonderful and precious still? And above all, if the planting of God's purchased people, "in the mountain of his inheritance" upon earth, called forth the prophetic gratitude of Moses and his inspired kindred—where shall *we* find words, who have in the Zion above "an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" Let the share (no rash or unbecoming one, agreeably to the custom of the times,) which Miriam, the sister of Moses, took in the celebration of Jehovah's praises, warm all female bosoms with a like spirit of fervid devotion; and, though restrained by modern manners, and apostolic injunction, from coming forward conspicuously in the public service of God, let us "make melody in our hearts," when we reflect on the great things which we are daily called on to commemorate.

But, Mary, unmingled joy and triumph are not the destined lot of humanity, nor the lasting companions of a journey through the desert. What

occurred ere long to damp the enthusiasm and awake the sinful murmurs of the Israelites?

MARY. The bitter waters of "Marah," Mama. They forgot the passage of the Red Sea, at the first little inconvenience, and were discontented immediately.

MAMA. Oh! Mary, you are unconsciously describing every one of ourselves! One slight cross blots out the remembrance of a life of providences. Wisely, indeed, are drops of bitterness mingled in our cup by Him "who doeth all things well;" since the very abuse we make of the gracious warning, is the best proof of its necessity. Instead of rejoicing, as many a poor pilgrim does at this day, in the same desert, (where there are only in 315 miles, about four wholesome springs,) even in the brackish and distasteful refreshment of Marah—the Israelites murmured against Moses, and consequently against God. But what chiefly concerns us in the relation, is the expedient pointed out by an indulgent God (in compliance with the prayer of his servant,) for rendering the waters not only drinkable, but salutary. We too have a specific for sweetening and healing the bitter fountains all must drink of in their pilgrimage through life. It is a plant of heaven, and called Religion. Man cannot find it unassisted, any more than Moses

could the "tree" of healing in our chapter; nor, without a blessing from on high, could it render, as it invariably does, the wormwood springs of earthly sorrow more healthful (if not so palatable to flesh and blood) than the flowing wells and spreading palm-groves of Elim.

MARY. Mama! How happy they must have been in the desert, to find so many wells and trees!

MAMA. Doubtless, Mary, as they encamped there to enjoy them; and you will be pleased to find that nine at least of the twelve wells are distinctly visible to modern travellers (the sand-drifts so common in that quarter having choked the other three) while the threescore palm-trees, to the inexpressible comfort of the way-worn wanderer in those sultry wastes, have multiplied to two thousand. Under their time-honoured shade stands what is shown by the neighbouring tribes as the "Bath of Moses," held by them in extraordinary veneration, and pointed out by them to this day, as the spot where the lawgiver of Israel and his own household specially encamped.

We have now followed the children of Israel from a state of oppression and imminent peril, to one of comparative ease and rest, which we shall

ere long see to be dangerous, if not fatal, to the piety of that carnal and ungrateful population.

Let us beware, like them, of forgetting either past mercies or past sufferings, and idly supposing exemption from trouble and exertion can be either intended, or wholesome for man. You, Mary, like emancipated Israel, are but on the threshold of a long and arduous journey; embark on it in the strength of the same God, and He can turn to the eye of faith its barren "desert into water-springs," and make its dreariest wilderness to "blossom as the rose."

MORNING EIGHTH.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters xvi. and xvii.

MAMA. We have in these chapters, my dear child, the record of a train of miracles, by which it pleased God—in continued proof of his power to preserve as well as rescue his chosen people—to provide for their sustenance in a situation where human means of support were wholly beyond their reach. In this, as in other portions of their history, we may find, along with much spiritual improvement, matter for personal application. We are ready enough to exclaim against the Israelites for regretting Egypt, and loathing manna, and breaking out (forgetful of the healed fountain of Marah) into sinful murmurings at Rephidim. We think their ingratitude and insensibility almost beyond nature; never remembering, that not only is every temporal blessing of *our* lot as directly (though invisibly) the gift of God, as the supernatural supplies of the desert—but that in a higher and spiritual sense we too

have "bread that came down from heaven," and "living waters" from the same "Rock that followed them, even Christ;" and must own ourselves "verily guilty" of the same sin of undervaluing the one, and forgetting the other! How many treat the "bread of life" as the ungrateful Israelites did the manna, either asking with scornful incredulity "What is it?" or seeking its supply in a manner not commanded or authorized by God, or lastly and most unpardonably, loathing its heavenly sweetness, and preferring the bitterest apples of Sodom the wilderness can afford, to its invigorating nourishment; while, whenever the "broken cisterns" of the desert oozing forth brackish and poisonous streams, suddenly fail their deluded frequenters—those at whose command is placed a gratuitous fountain of living waters, outrage their God like the Israelites with murmurs and complaints.

Let it not be so with us, Mary. In every temporal provision, let us acknowledge the hand of Him who "openeth it, and filleth all things living with plenteousness;" and should it ever fail or come short, let us turn the more heartily to the "bread which whosoever eateth shall never die," and to the "well of water which shall be within us springing up unto everlasting life!"

How long had the children of Israel enjoyed the seasonable refreshment of Elim?

MARY. I don't know exactly. It says they left it the "fifteenth day of the second month."

MAMA. Then, as the passover was established on the fifteenth day of the first, they must have been nearly a month, luxuriating in the shade and freshness of the palm-grove,—long enough, one would think, to lay in a stock both of faith and gratitude for future trials. But what happened the moment they found themselves once more in the desert?

MARY. They murmured, Mama, and wished they had died in Egypt. How foolish as well as wicked!

MAMA. And what was the cause of this base and sinful conduct?

MARY. They regretted the "flesh pots of Egypt," and said they had there "bread to the full." I dare say that was a story, Mama; for how could such poor ill-used creatures have had plenty of meat and bread?

MAMA. It was probably just as false as most of the reflections on Providence extorted by man's discontent and perverseness. How many who have "made bricks without straw" at the bidding of this world's taskmasters, during a long life, presume to contrast this abject condition

with the "free service" and "easy yoke" of Christ! How did God requite these ungrateful liars?

MARY. He said he would "rain bread on them from Heaven." If he had rained fire on them, like Sodom, it would not have been surprising.

MAMA. Mary, when shall we cease to think that "God is even such an one as ourselves," or to measure "His ways with our ways?" Of what nature was the bread so sent?

MARY. I don't know. There is a thing called "manna" yet, which I have seen given to the children: was it the same?

MAMA. This has been attempted to be proved, because the manna you mean is still found in that part of the world, though in very small quantities, and differing in many essential particulars from that described in Scripture. But it is of little consequence to the miracle: for the extent and regulation of the supply, its disappearance as the sun rose, and wonderful properties of not keeping over night (except on the Sabbath), render it as completely miraculous, as if no such natural production had ever existed. What are we to learn from its being sent "daily," and in quantities strictly proportioned to every man's daily wants?

MARY. Dependence upon God, Mama. We

ask him to give us our "daily bread" still, you know.

MAMA. Very well applied. Remember, we receive it as directly at his hand now, as if we could trace the mysterious process by which he yet sends it us from heaven, by means of the rain and sunshine which causeth "corn to grow, and herb for the food of man." What ancient institution, coeval with the creation, was miraculously confirmed by the provision of manna?

MARY. The Sabbath, I suppose you mean, Mama; for none fell that day, and the sixth day's kept good over it.

MAMA. This, Mary, while it places beyond a doubt the existence and recognised sanctity of the Sabbath, long before the delivering of the law upon Mount Sinai, may surely be interpreted by us as a Divine sanction for abstinence from worldly cares on God's holy day. What happened to some of the people who went out to gather manna on the Sabbath?

MARY. They found nothing; and no wonder —God had told them so.

MAMA. And has He not told us, Mary, in many parts of His word—as well as by the example of our Lord and his disciples (whom it ever found in the temple, in the synagogue, or all with one accord in one house praying and

praising God,) to call it also "holy and honourable," and abstain from doing on it (as is the practice with too many) "our own pleasure," or our own work? Let us be deterred from such a perversion of a most merciful institution, by the disappointment here recorded as its fruit, in the case of the unbelieving Israelites. How did God provide as usual for the future remembrance of this miraculous bread from heaven?

MARY. Most wonderfully, Mama! A pot of this manna (which would not keep till next day) was to be laid up, that "generations" to come might see it!

MAMA. Such unlimited power has the Author of all created things over their substance and properties! And yet we find it hard to believe that the bodies which we see subject to corruption, can be by Him made to "put on incorruption, and this mortal to put on immortality." Where was the manna thus wonderfully preserved to be kept?

MARY. "Before the testimony."—Where was that?

MAMA. It means the same as "before the Lord," in the preceding verse—being laid up in the ark of the testimony, between the cherubim on which the Divine presence was graciously manifested. What other memorial of their re-

sidence in the desert was afterwards there deposited?

MARY. I don't remember.

MAMA. The two tables of the law, Mary, originally delivered to Moses on Sinai; that moral law, "not one jot or tittle of which," our Lord says, "shall pass away"—though the mere Mosaic ritual, having served its temporary purpose, has melted—like the daily supply of manna—before the meridian splendour of the "Sun of Righteousness."

MAMA. How much was the "omer," Mama, that God allowed for each person?

MAMA. About half a peck of our measure; an ample supply, we may conclude, else it would not have been thus limited by "Him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not." Yet how did he "upbraid" or rebuke the greediness of those who sought to go beyond his allotment?

MARY. Mama, let them gather ever so much, "they had nothing over." It served them right!

MAMA. And what merciful provision was made by the same Hand, for those who from weakness or infirmity could but inadequately provide for themselves?

MARY. "He that gathered little had no lack." How kind this was in God!

MAMA. Yes, Mary, and we may trace the

same benevolent spirit in the ample measure of saving grace often vouchsafed from on High to the honest Christian, whom want of ability or education has deprived of the power of "gathering much" in the way of human learning, or even religious knowledge. But remember, in neither case is there the smallest encouragement held out to wilful indolence. The slothful Israelite who let the sun rise, and the hour for laying up his daily store escape him, and the negligent Christian, who defers his spiritual provision till the "night cometh when no man can work," shall alike be "sent empty away."

MARY. But, Mama, manna was not the only food God was pleased to send the people. He sent quails too.

MAMA. And why do you suppose this fresh miracle (for the daily arrival and incredible abundance of the birds, sufficient to serve two millions of people for a month, evidently attest it to be such) was wrought?

MARY. I know now, Mama. It was not to please the people's longing for flesh, but to shew that God could give it them in the wilderness, as easily as bread.

MAMA. Very well answered, my dear, and a proof that you are beginning to feel, by digesting and applying the spiritual food afforded you,

that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Let His temporal gifts always remind you of that higher and holier nourishment. How long did the children of Israel eat manna?

MARY. Forty years. What a long time for bread to rain from heaven on so many people!

MAMA. Yes, Mary, and what a long time for pensioners on God's daily bounty, to despise, and affront, and rebel against him. What says the psalm you repeat so often?

MARY. "Forty years long was I grieved with this people, and said, they do err in their hearts, that they have not known my ways."

MAMA. Aye, Mary, "*in their hearts!*" There is the source of all fatal error to be sought and found. It was the perverse hearts of the Israelites alone that prevented their knowing God's ways, so hourly displayed before their eyes. Let us take care *ours* be not also hardened "to-day," lest we also grieve the Holy Spirit, and provoke him to withdraw from us. But what hope may we gather from the supply of manna being continued (notwithstanding the people's unworthiness) till they came to the borders of Canaan?

MARY. I suppose that God will feed us also, all our lives upon earth.

MAMA. Yes, my dear, not only with "food convenient" for our earthly sustenance, but with the support from above, which can alone enable us to reach our heavenly Canaan. To what first trial did the Israelites put the forbearance of Jehovah?

MARY. When they pitched at Rephidim there was no water, and they did "chide with Moses," and said he had brought them out of Egypt to kill them with thirst. Poor Moses! I wonder he kept his temper so well!

MAMA. Are we not told he was "meek above all men on the face of the earth?" He could excuse any thing (as we shall see ere long) except ingratitude to God. How did *He* now answer the supplication of his ill-requited servant?

MARY. He bid him take his rod, which had opened a way through the sea, and strike the rock and bring out water.

MAMA. What rock, my dear?

MARY. The rock of Horeb.

MAMA. Has this mountain any other name?

MARY. I believe it and Sinai are the same.

MAMA. They are; only Horeb (in which you know the burning bush also was) is supposed to apply to the whole mountain or range, and Sinai to its lofty pinnacle whence the Law was uttered

amid thunders and lightning. What warfare now for the first time, awaited the wicked Israelites?

MARY. "Amalek came and fought with them."

MAMA. Observe the time, just when supernatural succours had been vouchsafed. And who were the Amalekites?

MARY. I don't know.

MAMA. Descendants of the eldest son of Esau, whose unprovoked violence to their kinsmen justified the resistance permitted by God. What part did Moses take in the conflict?

MARY. He took the "rod of God" in his hand, and as long as he held it up, "Israel prevailed."

MAMA. And how was he assisted when his bodily weakness threatened his people with defeat?

MARY. Aaron and Hur held up his hands on each side "till the going down of the sun."

MAMA. The whole transaction was a visible token, (such as a gross and carnal people require), of the efficacy of perseverance in prayer. Let the "lifting up of our hands" also be perpetual to him who hath said, that "men ought to pray always and not to faint." Why did God theaten Amalek with utter extinction?

MARY. I suppose for trying to hurt his people.

MAMA. Yes, Mary. Injuries to them are resented and avenged by him who said in later times, "Whosoever offendeth one of these little ones, it were better for him he had never been born." Let us conclude with and adopt the glorious motto inscribed by Moses on his altar, "The Lord our Banner;" and our victory, like that of Israel over His and our enemies, will be certain and complete.

MORNING NINTH.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters xviii. xix. and xx.

MAMA. In these interesting chapters, my dear child, we have the record of the most important transaction which, from the creation to the redemption of the world, ever took place between the Almighty and man. In the mount of God and its awful vicinity, we have, on the one hand, the Creator and Lawgiver of the universe promulgating, with the most impressive circumstances of natural and supernatural solemnity, that immutable law which, to Christian as well as Jew, our Lord has pronounced to be of everlasting obligation, nay, which the passing away "of heaven and earth" is insufficient to weaken or annul—and, on the other, the stupidest and most insensible people on earth, "persuaded" by the irresistible "terrors of the law," into not only implicit but cheerful reception of this pure and perfect rule of duty. Well had it been for

them had these words of ready assent, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," not vanished with the clouds, and died away with the thunderings amid which they were extorted from a people, with whom to "forget God" was a prevailing habit, not an occasional misfortune!

Let us examine those stupendous particulars of the present revelation which made its subsequent transgression so peculiarly unpardonable; but before entering on them, tell me who, in the first of this day's chapters, came to Moses, no doubt an honoured and welcome guest?

MARY. His father-in-law, Jethro, and he brought with him his sons and his wife. We never heard they had gone back to Midian.

MAMA. When it happened we are not told, but it was most natural for them now to rejoin Moses. Why so?

MARY. Because you told me the burning bush where Moses kept his father-in-law's flock, was in Horeb, so now his home could not have been far off.

MAMA. Very well remembered. What blessed effects had the knowledge acquired by Jethro of the doings of God for Israel, through his son-in-law, on his mind?

MARY. He said, "*Now* I know that the Lord *is* greater than all gods," and he offered a burnt-

offering to Him, along with the elders of Israel.

MAMA. This must have been a most gratifying circumstance to Moses. What gracious prediction did it fulfil?

MARY. You know God had promised in the bush, that Israel should worship God "on that mountain."

MAMA. Good again, Mary. Not a "jot or tittle" of God's *testimony*, any more than of His law, shall fail. With what excellent advice did this experienced "Prince of Midian" follow up his recognition of the true God?

MARY. He advised Moses to appoint wise men to help him to judge the people, as he was not able to do it alone, and to give them ordinances and laws to teach them how they should walk.

MAMA. The advice was sound and judicious, and Moses obeyed it as far as the appointment of subordinate judges went; but as we do not read of his taking upon himself to give laws to God's people, we may very reasonably infer that it was in consequence of his prayers for direction in so essential a matter, that Jehovah condescended in the following chapter to assume the office of Lawgiver. Yet, observe, it is carried on, (like all the proceedings of God with men) through an

appointed human instrument; and it is to Moses the awful words are in the first instance addressed, though the people were permitted to hear afar off the celestial voice. In what part of the mountain did this wonderful colloquy take place?

MARY. On Sinai; you said that was the name of the summit.

MAMA. Yes; modern travellers inform us that of the three peaks of Horeb, that of Sinai (still called in the neighbourhood, the Mount of Moses,) is incomparably the highest, having at its foot the monastery of St. Catherine's, from whence 14,090 steps once led to the very summit, some of which are yet visible. It is pleasing when tradition thus lingers around spots for ever hallowed by positive revelation. By what awful preparatory directions did God enhance the solemnity of the law He was about to deliver?

MARY. The people were to "sanctify themselves" three days before, and wash their clothes; and no creature (not even a beast) was to touch the mountain and live. Mama, this was enough to terrify any people.

MAMA. And so it did, Mary, for the time; while the trumpets and thunders mingled their voice, while "smoke as of a furnace" ascended *from Sinai,* "all the people that were in the camp

trembled,"—nay, it is said, Moses himself did "exceedingly fear and quake." Yet from the rapid and shameful oblivion into which both wonders and precepts shortly fell, with a rebellious and stiff-necked people, we have too much reason to fear that the only valid preparation—that of the *heart*—was neglected, and the only salutary fear—that of offending God—utterly wanting among the Israelites. Let it not be so with us, Mary. When contrasting, as we ought ever with humble and rejoicing hearts to do, the affecting tenor of our message of love in the Gospel, with the "mount that might not be touched," and "the words which they that heard prayed might not be spoken any more" of Sinai, —let us never forget, that for the due reception of the "still small voice" speaking "better things" with which we are favoured, a preparation more deep and heart-searching than that of the wilderness is indispensably required. And how different, how delightfully different, are the accompanying circumstances of the two dispensations! *We* are not bidden, like the Israelites, to "stand afar off" from the mount of God, and forbear to gaze on its mysteries, lest some inadvertent profanation should be atoned for with life, and an angry God should "break forth" on us in judgment. We are invited to "draw nigh in full

assurance of faith"—to "come to Christ that our souls may live"—to cry "Abba Father,"—in short, to frequent, in all the confidence and familiarity of children, the throne of Him in Heaven, whose footstool upon earth Israel was forbidden to approach. Never let us forget, never undervalue the glorious privilege, nor ungratefully lose, in the freeness of the service, our just sense of the immutability of the obligation. On Christian, as well as Jew, the moral law is for ever binding; and if in lieu of the bondage of Sinai, the "easy yoke" of Christ has been substituted, it only renders the ungrateful transgressor more unpardonable.

Let us analyse, my dear, this imperishable rule of duty from on high. How was it ushered in?

MARY. "God spake all these words, who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt and house of bondage."

MAMA. Strong claims these on Jewish obedience and veneration! but in what higher spirit of commemoration are we to receive and obey them?

MARY. As the words of Him who delivered us from the bondage of sin.

MAMA. Well answered, Mary, if your spiritual slavery has indeed been felt and deplored.

If so, how grateful will be your recognition of Him who achieved this everlasting ransom! What is His first solemn injunction?

MARY. "Thou shalt have none other Gods before me." *That* we are in no danger of breaking now, Mama.

MAMA. Not literally perhaps: spiritually I fear very often; for as in heathen times, it may be affirmed of many a human heart that there be in it "Gods many, and Lords many." Did you ever hear of a "Mammon" whom it is very possible for a Christian to worship?

MARY. Oh! yes, Mama; and I fear it is true; for our Lord says we cannot both worship him and God.

MAMA. Pray to that gracious Lord, my child, to cast out the "strong man armed," who keepeth too often the sanctuary within from its rightful owner; and fill it with His own holy and undivided presence! Remember the "prince of this world, who hath nought in Christ," yet who "ruleth in the children of disobedience," when you think yourself safe from a breach of the first commandment! What is the second?

MARY. "Thou shalt not make any graven image," &c. This at least, Mama, we cannot do now, and no thanks to us! for we have no temptation to do it.

MAMA. Not to make or bow down before images certainly; but there is an idolatry of the heart, one of the commonest as well as deadliest of offences against God. To "make" the human idols which so often supplant their Creator in our love, is indeed beyond our power; but to "set up" and worship them, is what I fear all more or less must plead guilty to; besides the homage daily extorted from us by base creatures of the imagination—fame, honour, fashion—things as vain in themselves, yet exalted into as shameless rivalry with God, as the monster or insect deities of heathen antiquity. How does the third commandment enforce reverence towards the name and attributes of God?

MARY. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

MAMA. Are you ever thus guilty, Mary?

MARY. I should have said "no" at once, Mama, but you make me think twice about every thing.

MAMA. From swearing and profanity, in its most flagrant and revolting sense, education and habit have certainly kept you free; but you do nevertheless "take God's name in vain" occasionally, as many older and wiser people unconsciously do. Did you never use "Lord bless me!"

"Good gracious!" and other even more direct appeals to the invisible God, on any trifling and frivolous occasions?

MARY. I am afraid I have, Mama; but since I find it forbid here, I'll try and leave it off.

MAMA. Oh! my dearest child, would we only "try and leave off," in the only name which can lend strength to our resolutions, all the practices conscience tells us are contrary to God's law, what happy as well as holy creatures should we quickly become! May we be enabled to rise from the easy reformation of such idle habits as this, to more difficult and important branches of duty. The next commandment, I fear, must oblige all to smite on their breast, like the publican, and say, "God be merciful to us sinners." How *should* the Sabbaths of God be remembered?

MARY. By "keeping them holy."

MAMA. Yes, Mary; and this is the main design of the institution, to which the "rest" it graciously permits is merely subservient. The "*rest*" we are all (notorious Sabbath-breakers excepted) ready enough to enjoy; but the "*holiness*," Mary, what becomes of its universal and sweeping requisition? Is a languid and heartless attendance of a couple of hours at church (and how many with this begin and end their

Sabbath "holiness?") the required dedication of one day in seven to the God in "whose hand are," and might have remained, "*all* our days?" But setting even our Creator and his claims aside, do we thus fulfil the gracious declaration of our Lord, that the "Sabbath was made for man?" Made! and for what? To lift one day in seven off his emancipated soul, the weight of this world's leaden atmosphere, which presses him down to earth, and clogs the wings of his immortal spirit, —to let in upon his prison-house some rays, though feeble and distant ones, of the heavenly light which can alone guide him through time, and will one day burst on him in eternity,— to let him breathe for a short and blessed interval that "breath of life" which a thousand noxious influences are ever at work to weaken, and, but for such seasonable "times of refreshing from the Lord," would infallibly extinguish. My dear Mary, let such be our Sabbath privileges and Sabbath enjoyments! "Holy let us be," (to borrow the words of Moses in his dying blessing on those who keep all God's commandments,) "in the city, and in the field, and in our going out, and coming in," on this "day of the Lord;" and "blessed" shall we no doubt be also, with the same comprehensive and irrevocable blessing.

We have now gone through that first part—*first*, remember, Mary, in precedence and importance—of the moral law, which relates to our duty to God. That to our neighbour we must dismiss more briefly; though without for a moment overlooking the gracious result of its various wise and benign provisions—were they but partially observed—viz: "peace on earth and good-will to men." In this division of the law, it becomes more than ever important to observe that every prohibition of sin implies the cultivation of the opposite temper. Murder, adultery, and stealing, are vices, abstinence from which, in your class of society, hardly amounts to virtue; but not only are the malice, levity, and covetousness from which these odious actions spring, to be diligently searched for, and in God's strength extirpated—but positive benevolence, sobriety, and liberality, as imperatively enjoined. "Cease to do evil," and "learn to do well," are terms inseparable in Scripture. Were their connexion more attended to, mere negative freedom from gross sins would not speak "peace where there is no peace" to "so many a deceived heart." But can even this be pleaded where the ninth commandment is concerned? How does it run?

MARY. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Mama, we may never

be called on to "bear witness" at all, and I am sure if we were, we should speak truth. I saw a man sworn once, and it is so awful!

MAMA. Would to God that thousands who are sworn and *forsworn* every day, thought it so, my dear! But are you sure you are not of the number? You are sworn to God in your baptismal vow to "renounce the devil and all his works," of these we know falsehood to be the chief; and of the "lies," of which he is the "father," malicious, or even thoughtless ones, to our neighbours' prejudice, must ever rank highest. From these, my child, are any of us entirely free? Have we never, in haste or passion, exaggerated or misrepresented a fellow-creature's conduct? Nay, have we never, in wanton levity of speech, repeated the slander it was our duty to have shamed into silence? Till we can say this, we are "verily guilty concerning our brother," and must humbly pray for forgiveness, and the cure of "this evil also." The final commandment of the law, I fear, will find us equally faulty. What does it forbid?

MARY. Coveting our neighbours' goods. I *used* to long for every thing I saw, Mama, but I hope I am not so silly now.

MAMA. Say so wicked, my dear, and you *will speak* more truly. Advancing years have

cured the folly, see that growing religion convinces you of the sin! Covet no man's rank, for the "powers that be are of God,"—nor his personal advantages, for it is "God that maketh you to differ,"—nor his talents, for "wisdom is not always to men of understanding;" but, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things" (really needful) "shall be added unto you!"

MORNING TENTH.

LESSON.—Exodus, Chapters xxxii. xxxiii. and xxxiv. to ver. 10.

MARY. Mama; why have you made me pass, in reading, from the 20th to the 32d chapter? I suppose because what we left out was only about the Jews' particular laws and customs.

MAMA. Yes, my dear. We omitted these chapters, that in compliance with your own request, and for reasons in which I concurred, you might follow up the *history* of the chosen people of God, apart, for the present, from their peculiar institutions. And though it has not been without regret that I have deferred pointing out to you the many excellent general precepts of equity and mercy, both to man and beast, which suffice to lend permanent interest to the ritual observances with which they are mixed up, yet I am reconciled to the omission by the advantage of presenting to you the last sad historical fact contained in the book of Exodus, the making of the golden calf, in immediate connexion with the

awful solemnities of Sinai; which no doubt would lead you or any one inexperienced in the "deceitfulness" and "desperate wickedness" of the human heart, to conclude idolatry in the witnesses of them *impossible*. Oh! the inconsistency and waywardness of man! One moment saying, "Let not God speak with us lest we die," and "all that the Lord hath said unto us we will do;" and the next, profanely clamouring, "Up! make us gods!" And when fashioned before their eyes of their own eagerly sacrificed trinkets, exclaiming, "These be thy gods, O Israel! which brought thee out of the land of Egypt!" What were the materials of this worse than childish object of worship?

MARY. The people's gold ear-rings, and you told me last year how they were melted down, to explain the meaning of a "molten image." Mama, I daresay these were just the jewels of gold which the Israelites "borrowed" or asked of the Egyptians before they went away; for I don't think slaves could have had any of their own.

MAMA. Very likely, Mary; though I think you have the credit of the conjecture, which is somewhat ingenious. If such was the case, like many other objects of worldly desire, they were surely given them for their hurt; and it had been better they had left Egypt in all the poverty of

their original servitude. But to return to this awful transaction itself. How long a time had elapsed since the delivery of the law?

MARY. I don't know exactly. Not quite forty days though, for Moses only staid that time, and it was his not coming down that made them lose patience.

MAMA. Mary! how long did it take to exhaust God's patience with *them?* Even forty years of constant rebellion and distrust; so "distant as east and west" are the compassions of Omnipotence from the caprices of finite mortals! But who, more inexcusable still than the people, lent a ready ear to their impious proposal?

MARY. Aaron, Mama, Moses' own brother, and one who should surely have known better!

MAMA. We all or most of us "know better" than we act, my dear, and it has been alleged in Aaron's exculpation, that the idolatry he connived at, was merely in subordination to the worship of Jehovah. But had he not heard that He was a "jealous God?" and surely his jealousy upon Egypt and her gods (of which the golden calf was a direct symbol) might have been fresh enough in his memory! There is something so senseless as well as wicked in the whole idea of ascribing to the guardian deity of Egypt, the ox, —the supposed honour of rescuing and avenging

her oppressed bondmen, that we can only see in it one of those "strong delusions" which we know the "father of lies" is able to practise on nations and individuals, deserted for their own iniquities, by the restraining grace of God. Do you recollect any other golden calves subsequently made in Israel, under the same pretext of a visible representation of the true God?

MARY. Yes; those set up by "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." I remember these awful words occurring an hundred times in our last years' reading.

MAMA. And do you remember *why* Jeroboam set up this prohibited image-worship in rivalry of the temple of Jerusalem? Just for the reason which caused the sinful compliance of Aaron, viz. fear of losing the authority which God had given him for a very different purpose. Jeroboam made his calves, lest the ten tribes, by worshipping at Jerusalem, should revert to their allegiance to the house of David; and Aaron, lest upon his refusal, the impatient people should choose another leader, and return to Egypt. Had both forgotten that He who exalted could maintain and defend them? But, Mary, though Moses was absent, had not the Israelites all this time even visible tokens of the continued presence and favour of Jehovah?

MARY. To be sure they had, Mama, though I did not think of them before, both the pillar of a cloud and the daily supply of manna. Really, all these things make them out worse and worse!

MAMA. And how did even a long-suffering God testify his sense of their outrageous ingratitude?

MARY. Mama, he must have been very angry, for he calls them *Moses's* people, not His, and offers to consume them, and make of him "a great nation," instead.

MAMA. And did Moses accept this tempting proposal?

MARY. Oh! no, he was too good a man.

MAMA. Yes, and the truly good are always disinterested, preferring the advantage and welfare of their brethren to selfish aggrandizement. But was it for the sake of even his beloved countrymen that Moses *chiefly* besought God to pardon and bear with them?

MARY. No, it was for God's own honour and glory, lest the Egyptians should say, He had "brought them out for mischief;" and for the sake of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

MAMA. By whom had God sworn to those believing patriarchs that He would "multiply their seed as the stars of heaven," and settle them *in Canaan?*

MARY. By Himself.

MAMA. So you see the vindication of that awful oath was still the chief motive, as well as ground of Moses's intercession. Oh! that we could imbibe from this distinguished servant of God, a portion of his *genuine* "zeal for the Lord of Hosts!" How was it nobly recompensed?

MARY. "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do to his people?" How could that be, Mama? It says somewhere, "The Lord is not a man that he should repent."

MAMA. Well remembered, Mary, and the term is only used in condescension to our incapacity to measure otherwise than by remote human analogies the ways of Omnipotence. But do you happen to remember of what it is compassionately said, "The Lord is not a man that He should repent?" It is—blessed be His name, as a God of mercy—His *merciful* purposes, which he is said in Scripture to be incapable of changing; while the same word of truth assures us more than once, that (in a sense to us necessarily myterious,) "He repented Him of the evil" his disobedient children had called down on their guilty heads. What proof have we in this very chapter, that fellow-mortals—even the meekest the world ever saw—are less tolerant than their outraged Creator?

MARY. Moses broke the tables of the law in his anger, "when he saw the calf and the dancing." Mama, this was surely foolish. Suppose we should burn our Bibles because our neighbours are wicked!

MAMA. *That* would be foolish, indeed, Mary, because no motive for such wanton profanation could be urged. But as Moses is never blamed for this symbolical action, expressive of his sense of the people's yet more irreparable breach of the divine law, we may conclude, a divine impulse, or permission at least, authorized it. But in what very different spirit did he destroy the idol which had been made in his absence?

MARY. He ground it in powder and strewed it on the water, and made the people drink it.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, and as the *only* water which relieved their thirst in a parching wilderness, flowed directly from the bounty of God, the allusion to their ingratitude must have made the draught doubly bitter and distasteful. What did Moses accuse his brother of doing?

MARY. Of bringing sin upon the people. I thought it was they who brought it upon him.

MAMA. A strong censure on all those who abuse their authority or influence by even conniving at the sins of those beneath them! Aaron, *with* the usual self-delusion, strove to excuse

himself because another individual, in all probability, actually manufactured the calf. As if God, who sees the heart, could be appeased by such shallow sophistry! The suggestion of breaking off their gold ornaments for this unworthy purpose, originated, (on his own confession,) with Aaron; and on him has rested ever since, in strict justice, the odium of "making Israel to sin."

MARY. Mama, what does it mean that "Aaron had made the people naked to their shame among their enemies?"

MAMA. This passage is usually interpreted figuratively, as signifying the deserved withdrawal of the Divine protection; but as most heathen rites, those of Egypt especially, mingled impurity with profaneness, there may be a literal as well as spiritual meaning in the expression. What confirms, however, its more awful and primitive sense, is the catastrophe which followed hard on the sin of the Israelites. Did God, on this occasion, "encamp around and deliver" these rebellious idolaters?

MARY. Oh! no, Mama! On the contrary, Moses ordered the Levites, in God's name, to "kill every man his brother, and companion, and neighbour," to the number of three thousand men.

MAMA. And do you not shudder, my dear, to see, as the direct consequence of sin, such fearful abandonment of the offenders to the vengeance, not of enemies, but of the sword of friends and relations; whose reluctant execution of an outraged God's decree must have formed their own bitterest share of punishment? Repentance is at all times a hard task, repugnant to flesh and blood, and delayed as such at the risk of the soul itself. Did you ever think what it must be to "return to God" at the expense of every tie of blood and friendship,—to "consecrate ourselves," like the Levites, "every man upon his son and upon his brother?" Pray God, my child, that in a different and far holier sense, we may all do so, by winning them by our counsel and example to the service of our God, to whom mercy is at all times more welcome than sacrifice! How did Moses renew his intercession when the bloody atonement required had been offered up?

MARY. He prayed to be "blotted out of God's book" rather than the people should not be forgiven. Mama! Was not this rather too much? He surely could not wish to lose heaven even for his countrymen.

MAMA. No, my dear; even Christian charity *does not require* this, though for his "brethren

according to the flesh" an Apostle could "*almost* wish himself accursed." But the "blotting out" Moses speaks of, was of a temporal nature, and confined to the resignation of all his own earthly advantages, nay life itself, to purchase the pardon of his nation. This self-denying proposal God was too just to accept; for we know, that with the exception of the atonement offered by one "greater than Moses," no man, by even dying for another, can cancel a fraction of his guilt before God. How did He testify that his anger was not yet wholly appeased?

MARY. He said he would "yet visit their sin upon them," and "he plagued them because of the golden calf."

MAMA. Yes, the consequences of our sins often long survive even their renunciation; and I fear idolatry of some kind or other is too rooted in the human heart to be ever thoroughly renounced. How does God, in the next chapter, manifest his remaining indignation against Israel?

MARY. He still calls them the people *Moses* brought out of Egypt, and says, He would not go with them, but only send an angel.

MAMA. And why?

MARY. Because the people were stiff-necked, and lest God should consume them by the way.

MAMA. Oh! Mary, let these awful words make us remember to whom "*our* God is a consuming fire," and tremble lest we also forfeit his protection, and incur his wrath! What effect had this humiliating announcement on the Israelites?

MARY. "They mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments."

MAMA. Was there any thing peculiarly appropriate *here* in this latter symbol of mourning?

MARY. I suppose you mean because it was the people's gold ornaments that they had given to make the calf.

MAMA. Exactly; the first effect of genuine repentance is to make us loathe the occasions of sin. But indeed the sacrifice thus made was enjoined by God; and (were we to read further at present) we should be delighted to find, in the account of the erection of the Tabernacle, that those instruments of past transgression were freely dedicated by a penitent people to the service of God for ever. This, and this only, is the test of genuine reformation; and it is its own blessed reward. How different, my child, think you, were the feelings of the Israelites when drinking, at the bidding of Moses, the waters embittered to them by the ashes of their *shattered* and contemptible idol—from the holy

satisfaction with which they must have adorned the sanctuary of a reconciled God with the free-will offerings of subdued and grateful hearts! By what striking change did God at this time manifest that He must be "*sought* of them" who really wished to turn to Him?

MARY. Moses pitched the Tabernacle outside the camp, far off; and the congregation went out to it.

MAMA. Do you remember an allusion to this in the New Testament? We are there bidden to "go out of the camp to Christ, bearing our reproach,"—to denote that separation from the mass of mankind of the true Israel of God—here first shadowed out, by a visible sign, to a gross and carnal people. The Tabernacle being thus removed from a camp polluted by idolatry, how was it again gloriously taken possession of by its heavenly tenant?

MAMA. The cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of it, and "the Lord talked with Moses as a man speaketh unto his friend."

MAMA. Glorious words! my dear Mary, and, blessed be God! not confined to Moses, favoured as he was in the hearing of all Israel. There is, in the heart of every true Christian, a temple "not made with hands," where a "Comforter," unknown to holy men of old, talks, as

with a friend, to every sincere and penitent believer. Is your tabernacle set up and ready, Mary? is it beautified with all the early piety and humble obedience your years allow, to receive Him who hath said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God?" How did Moses testify his deep sense of the necessity of God's abiding presence?

MARY. He said, "If thy presence go not up with us, carry us not up hence."

MAMA. And what was as usual his pious reason for this earnest stipulation?

MARY. That he and God's people might thus be "separated from all the people that were on the face of the earth."

MAMA. Very well answered, and precisely to the point. How did God receive this request; as he does *all* those which have His glory, and spiritual privileges directly in view?

MARY. He said—"I will do this thing also, that thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in my sight."

MAMA. Strange! my dear, that the *uniform* fulfilment of religious petitions in Scripture, should not animate the most lukewarm to a like holy importunity! To what further remarkable request did it embolden Moses?

MARY. "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." This was presumption in Moses, Mama, was it not? He might have known no man could "see God and live."

MAMA. It was rather, my dear, a remarkable instance of that intense aspiration after heavenly things, which even a partial enjoyment of them is sure to awaken in a pious soul—of a piece with the emotions of Peter on the mount of transfiguration, where, unwilling ever to forego again its exquisite glories, he exclaimed, "Lord! It is good for us to be here! Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias!" How did God condescendingly comply with the *possible* part of Moses's petition?

MARY. By making his "goodness to pass before him."

MAMA. Yes, Mary, that gracious portion of his attributes by which his glory is touchingly veiled to accommodate it to human apprehension. Let us ever remember, that it was in "showing mercy," God chose to prove Himself *glorious* to his highly favoured servant of old. And in the striking figure of the cleft of the rock, within which, sheltered by an omnipotent hand, Moses found refuge from the overwhelming, though partial prospect of the fulness of the Godhead, let every Christian recognise the symbol of that

"spiritual rock, even Christ," to which all must flee, who would sustain unconsumed, either in time or eternity, the ineffable splendours of the Divine presence.

Let us conclude our review of this book of the history of the Israelites by the recital of the new and benignant titles, under which, on the republication of his insulted law, God was pleased most appropriately to make Himself known. No comments of man can add to their force and solemnity, and with them we will take our leave of the Book of Exodus, praying that they may be engraved alike on our hearts and memories. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

Couple these immutable declarations of "Him who cannot lie," my dear child, with the lost state of the world in general, and your own in particular, and admire in the dust, the plan of redemption by which the former and latter parts of them have been made to agree, and "mercy and truth to embrace each other" in the sacrifice of Christ!

MORNING ELEVENTH.

LESSON.—Numbers, Chapters xi. and xii.

MARY. So, Mama! we have passed over I don't know how many chapters of Exodus, and got into the middle of a new book! Why so?

MAMA. For your own alleged reason, that the chapters omitted consist chiefly, though not exclusively, of those laws, and ceremonies, and local regulations of the Jews, which you objected to as confusing and interrupting your former perusal of their history. Your age and incapacity to enter as yet into the admirable adaptation of these Divine ordinances to the condition of the Jews, and God's designs on that singular people, induce me to defer pointing them out at present. I shall only generally repeat, that while the vast superiority of the Jewish laws to those of every other nation, prove their Divine origin—their undesigning intermixture with the historical events we find difficulty in separating from them—is a no less unanswerable proof of their being as old as Moses, and the words of inspiration.

This book of Numbers, as its name imports, especially records the "order of the tribes," their genealogies and numerical strength, as well as their respective contributions to the erecting of the Tabernacle; minute points, in which, though highly interesting to a Jew, we are comparatively unconcerned. But the last of the chapters omitted contains, at its close, two such interesting particulars, that we must turn back (though late) to collect them. Read from the 28th verse of the 10th chapter, and remark the spiritual as well as friendly tenor of Moses's invitation to Hobab, his brother-in-law, to cast in his lot with the people of God. Whither did he say they were journeying?

MARY. To the place which God was to give them.

MAMA. The strong language of assured faith! as in what follows we recognise that of true benevolence, "Come with us, and we will do thee good." Let us adopt it, Mary, whenever we see lingering beyond the pale of the Christian's blessed "land of promise" those to whom, by inviting them within it, we can do unmixed and everlasting good. If the "Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel" of old, more surely are enduring blessings in store for those who, leaving father and mother, if needful, "seek a better

country, even an heavenly." Did Hobab at once comply with the invitation?

MARY. No, Mama; but he must have been a kind person, for he agreed to stay when Moses told him he could be of great use to them.

MAMA. Yes; and this mere absence of selfishness had its temporal reward in his share in the future prosperity of Israel. But why was the company of this Arab so useful in the desert?

MARY. I have read in travels that Arab guides are still taken to show strangers the wells, and keep them from losing their way. But did not God teach the Israelites their's, and go before them, which was much better?

MAMA. Yes, Mary; but we nowhere find Divine Providence superseding human endeavours; and while we know the main body of Israel to be under direct supernatural guidance, detached parties were often sent out for particular purposes; and in many ways the experience of Hobab might contribute, as at this day, to the comfort of wayfarers in the desert. God only gave water miraculously, when natural supplies failed; and with these the shepherd prince of Midian would be well acquainted, and his name and presence a check on his marauding countrymen. But lest we should for a moment suppose an "arm of flesh" to be invoked by Moses in

disparagement of Israel's true strength and rock, read me his beautiful morning invocation when the ark of God's presence "set forward."

MARY. "Rise up, Lord! and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee."

And when it rested, he said, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

MAMA. Sublime words these, Mary, and worthy of His Spirit by whom alone such prayers can be dictated! But we must come back to our chapters; and how humbling is it to find, that a people thus miraculously encompassed and guided "complained!" The nature of their discontent at this time is not mentioned; but sinful we are sure it was, from its signal punishment. How did God testify his anger?

MARY. "The fire of the Lord consumed all them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp."

MAMA. Some have supposed that the pillar of fire—that symbol of the Divine presence which their "complaints" insulted, was made the instrument of their chastisement—others that the hot desert wind, (likened by Arab writers to the "angel of vengeance") swept off the guilty stragglers who lingered farthest from their "ark *of refuge*." This wind we are told once occa-

sioned the death of 20,000 men. Certain it is that great armies and numerous caravans have fallen victims to its fiery breath, even when undirected so visibly by the unerring vengeance of Jehovah. At whose prayer was it withdrawn?

MARY. Oh! Moses's, he never could bear to see the people punished. But, Mama, they were really too bad! They wept directly after, like children, for "flesh and leeks and onions." I wonder they were not ashamed.

MAMA. Instead of wondering, as we are all apt to do, at the shameful inconsistency of the Jews, let us rather humbly acknowledge that of human nature. The history of the Jews is a mirror in which every wayward individual among ourselves may "behold, as in a glass," the distrust, and discontent, and self-will, and rebellion, which mark, more or less, the conduct of every sojourner in this world's wilderness. Were the Israelites singular, think you, in preferring the slavish "flesh-pots of Egypt" to the wholesome privations of their journey Zionward? Alas! no. We too "murmur" at the discipline which would school us for Heaven, and we too have our sinful wishes granted to our hurt. The Jews loathed their "bread from Heaven." How often do we cast away our's for some perishable "gourd," more contemptible still than the "leeks

and onions" of the carnal Israelites! Whose faith and patience nearly sunk under this bitter trial of a nation's upbraidings?

MARY. Poor Moses; he prayed to be "killed out of hand" rather than "bear all this people alone."

MAMA. And how did a gracious God lighten the burden?

MARY. He appointed seventy elders to share it with him.

MAMA. Was this appointment merely temporary, or did it continue to after-ages?

MARY. I don't know.

MAMA. Did you never read in the New Testament of the Seventy, or Sanhedrim, the great council of the Jews, which is supposed to date from this period. Before entering on the miracle of quails, to which their appointment was preparatory, let us finish the account of their ordination. Where did they attend by God's command?

MARY. At the Tabernacle, outside the camp, you know.

MAMA. In token of sacred separation from a sinful multitude. And how did the Lord graciously fit them for their important office?

MARY. He "put his Spirit upon them, and they prophesied."

MAMA. We formerly read much about prophets, what did we say they were?

MARY. Men whom God enables to foretel what is to come.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, that is the primary meaning of the word, but not its only one. Our Lord himself is called our "Prophet;" and foretelling the future was the least of his great benefits to mankind.

MARY. It must mean a Teacher, also, Mama; one who reveals God's will to us.

MAMA. It does, and in a third or lower sense, it signifies in the Bible one supernaturally inspired to praise and glorify God. Such seems to have been the gift of prophecy here, and also on that memorable occasion when it was asked of a hitherto idle and undistinguished youth, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" But was this great though subordinate privilege confined to those of the Seventy who went out to the Tabernacle?

MARY. No, Mama, there were two who staid in the camp, and they "prophesied too."

MAMA. A clear proof that their abstinence from public attendance was justifiable and not sinful; and a corroboration of our Christian axiom, that God is not confined to "temples made with hands," but present in his retirement

with every sincere and conscientious worshipper. Who "envied, for Moses's sake," this distinguished privilege?

MARY. Joshua, the young man who always waited on Moses.

MAMA. And how did his meek master rebuke him?

MARY. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit among them!"

MAMA. Let such be our ardent aspirings, Mary, that the "knowledge of God may fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea!" How was the miracle predicted in the former part of this chapter now accomplished?

MARY. God sent forth a wind, and brought quails in quantities from the sea, and let them fall all round the camp. Mama! what a very strange way of giving the people flesh! where *did* they all come from?

MAMA. Being birds of passage, and in great numbers in southern countries, there is no difficulty in supposing (were it necessary) that the "wind" sent by the Almighty could direct their migrating thousands, for this special purpose, to the camp of Israel; especially as in parts of America at this day, flocks, or rather *clouds* of pigeons, past all human computation, settle periodically

on given spots, till the air is darkened, and the earth is encumbered with their carcases; and the hundreds of people who flock to the annual slaughter, are wearied knocking down with sticks their exhausted senseless prey. This curious phenomenon has never yet been explained; and till it is, we may save ourselves the trouble of accounting for a miracle. I only know, that reading modern travellers' descriptions of this flight and carnage of pigeons, helped me, (as many modern narratives do,) to take in the number and slaughter of the quails in our chapter. How long did God promise that the people should be thus miraculously fed?

MARY. "A whole month," Mama; but it only says here, they gathered two days and a night.

MAMA. I wanted to see if you would observe this. How was this sudden supply rendered permanent?

MARY. "They spread them abroad all round the camp;" but surely, Mamma, in so hot a country they would spoil.

MAMA. No, my dear; exactly because it *is* so very hot and dry, mere exposure to sun and wind will in those countries preserve flesh for a long time. Sometimes it is buried by the Arabs

in the burning sand—sometimes only hung at their saddle-bow; but if moisture is excluded, it will keep weeks if necessary. Yet I daresay the offals, and less carefully preserved remnants of their unholy excess, were made God's instruments in producing the pestilence which followed. How soon did it visit this carnal and sinful people?

MARY. "While the flesh was yet within their teeth," Mama, so their enjoyment of it was not long.

MAMA. Longer in proportion by far, my dear Mary, and less to be despised in comparison—than the snatches of base earthly gratification, for which thousands forfeit their hopes of eternity. We call them fools, and justly! Let us beware lest they have cause to retort the charge, when they see us shut out like themselves from the Canaan above. Three short days did those "eat flesh" and perish in the wilderness, who might have spent long lives of sanctified prosperity in Canaan, had they but once believed, and trusted in God.

MARY. Mama! surely Moses was the worst used man that ever lived. In the next chapter his very brother and sister "spoke against him."

MAMA. And on what account, my dear?

MARY. On account of his Ethiopian wife. I

remember you said at the time it was wrong in him to marry her.

MAMA. Not exactly, Mary,—I only pointed out a remarkable instance in which this heathen connexion endangered his life; and we have now another, in which it exposed him to domestic unhappiness, and brought sin and disgrace into his family.

MARY. But God was angry with Miriam and Aaron about it.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, because (whatever might be the pretext of their rebellion,) it was founded on pride,—which He delights in humbling—and outraged His authority, which He is sworn to uphold. Miriam, who, we may remember, led in a very different spirit the praises of the women on the passage of the Red Sea,—probably resented the loss of her consequence since Jethro had brought his daughter to share with her husband Moses, the respect of Israel. But that was no reason why she should exalt herself to an equality with Moses himself, and lead on Aaron to partake her guilt; which we must suppose her to have done, as she alone was punished. How was her sinful pride appropriately humbled?

MARY. She became "leprous, white as snow." I know that was a great disgrace, Mama, no one could keep company with her.

MAMA. Yes, Mary,—when inclined to be proud, and resist those whom God has put over you,—think of Miriam, the great prophetess of Israel, shut out ignominiously from the camp, in a state of loathsome disease; from which she was only relieved at the prayer of him whom she had insulted in the tenderest point. What a triumph for the meek Moses, that the malice of rebels should only draw from God the most signal testimonies He had yet given of favour towards His servant! What text of the New Testament does this remarkably confirm?

MARY. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

MAMA. Very well remembered.

MARY. But, Mama, why is it said here—"If her father had only spit in her face," &c. I don't understand the expression.

MAMA. I daresay not; it is a strong Jewish figure to mark parental contempt and displeasure. Spitting on, or even *near* any one, is a great affront in eastern countries, and the supposition of such conduct in a parent is expressive of almost unpardonable crime in the child who called it forth. It is here used to prove God's sense of the guilt of Miriam.

Let us beware, Mary, lest we give our earth-

ly, and far more our heavenly Parent, cause thus to spurn and disown us. There are errors in women, which not only shut them hopelessly out of the pale of society on earth, but (unless deeply repented) from that of acceptance in heaven. Of all such, pride and vanity are the foundation; and the earliest way in which these can show themselves, is in contempt of our elders and betters. Let all women, instead of vain contentions for superiority and idle outward "adornings," which end too often in shame, "put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price."

MORNING TWELFTH.

LESSON.—Numbers, Chapters xiii. and xiv.

MAMA. We have, my dear child, in the beginning of the first of these chapters, (containing so melancholy a record of human despondency and want of faith in God) a fresh instance of gracious condescension on the part of Him "who knew what was in man." For though it is said here, that the command to send out men to search the land of Canaan (on whose confines the people had now arrived) proceeded from God, yet Moses, in his recapitulation of the history in Deuteronomy appeals to themselves, whether their own sinful distrust and timidity did not first suggest the proposal.

Moses, in the strength of his God, and "full assurance of faith," bade them "go up and possess the good land," to whose threshold they had now, under his banner, so triumphantly advanced; but the people, always so bold in disobedience and rebellion, were ever disposed, when urged in the

path of duty, to say with the sluggard—"There is a lion in the way!" and it was in this spirit that the idea of sending out spies was conceived. The compliance with it of God and Moses must not blind us to its sinful origin, or its fatal consequences, in filling up the measure of that rebellion which finally excluded the whole generation that came up out of Egypt from the land of promise their incredulity had forfeited.

How many men were sent out on this expedition?

MARY. Twelve, Mama; one out of every tribe. Why did Moses change "Oshea the son of Nun's name into Jehoshua?"

MAMA. To give him one which among the Jews was the same as "Jesus," (by which last indeed he is expressly called in many parts of the New Testament,) in testimony of his being the earthly "Saviour," (which the word signifies,) who was to bring the Israelites triumphantly into Canaan; and as such, a type of the greater Deliverer who was to conquer for Christians a "more enduring inheritance." Moses in this change must have acted under the influence of God's prophetic Spirit; as his own forfeiture, by disobedience, of the Leader's office, had not yet occurred.

MARY. Mama, the bunch of grapes which re-

quired to be carried between two men, must surely have been miraculous! none grow naturally so large, do they?

MAMA. It is not necessary to suppose that its size alone occasioned a mode of conveyance well calculated to preserve it from being bruised and injured. But many ancient authors agree in representing the grapes of Mount Lebanon and the adjoining regions as prodigiously large. Some say the bunches were two cubits long—others, the vines so thick that two men could scarce compass them; and modern travellers have been astonished at the size of the single grapes, comparing them to a prune. This would strike the Israelites the more, as those of Egypt, we are told, were very small. Now tell me how many days were employed in this search, that we may observe its connexion with the sequel.

MARY. Forty, Mama. And some of the men gave an excellent account of the land, and said it was just what God had promised; and showed them the very fruit! How foolish, as well as wicked they were, not to go and take it!

MAMA. True, Mary. But what hindered them?

MARY. Oh! the strength of the people, and their "great walled cities," and the "children of

Anak." Were they really giants, Mama, or did these cowardly creatures only suppose so?

MAMA. We have no reason for doubting the extraordinary stature of some among the Canaanites, from what we read in Scripture of Og and Goliath, and others. But did their preternatural strength and size enable *them* to contend successfully with God?

MARY. O! no. Goliath, for all his size, was killed with a stone by a shepherd boy. But there are no giants now, Mama, are there?

MAMA. None, Mary, I believe, in the natural world, notwithstanding some doubtful relations of modern navigators. But if we look within, and question our own hearts, we shall find that the "strong man armed" who keeps them from God, still paralyses, like the "Anakim" of the slothful Israelites, our efforts to dislodge him. "We be not able to go up against him," whisper doubt, and insincerity, and love of ease. But what said virtuous Caleb in the strength of his God, and what should every Christian, in the power of his Redeemer, humbly reply to such fatal suggestions, that would rob him of his heavenly prize? "Let us go up and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it!"

There is one remarkable feature of the "evil report" of the treacherous spies, which will be

equally found to pervade all the insinuations of scoffers against religion, viz. that independently of the undoubted exaggeration regarding giants, it was utterly untrue! "It is a land" (said they) "that eateth up the inhabitants thereof," meaning one poor, and barren, and unwholesome. Did this tally with what we know of the remarkable fertility of the earthly Canaan, or with the noble specimen of its fruits, which might have put the very gainsayers to silence?

MARY. No, Mama. I wonder the people could listen to them, in the face of it.

MAMA. Let us beware, Mary, how we listen to disparaging accounts of the blessings and substantial advantages of religion. Men of undoubted veracity, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, have "searched out" for us this privileged country, braved its surrounding perils, and made their way at length "through much tribulation" to its happy shores. Is the report they have left us, and sealed too with their blood, an "evil one?" or is it not, rather, like that of faithful Joshua, "The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in you, He will bring you into this land and give it you!" Such, Mary, is the uniform testimony of the "excellent of the earth" as to the joys and advantages of Christ's kingdom, as contrasted

with the wilderness without. Can we believe it, and not say at once as the Israelites did when it was too late—"Lo! we be here! and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised?"

But to return to the Israelites. How did their belief in the unworthy rumours of the majority of the spies display itself?

MARY. Oh! as usual, they cried and wept like children, and said, "Would God they had died in Egypt, or in the wilderness!"

MAMA. Stop, Mary, was any part of this most sinful wish granted?

MARY. Yes, the latter part; they *did* all die in the wilderness.

MAMA. I wished to see if you observed the connexion—here more immediately visible than usual—between a state of determined impenitent guilt, and its inevitable punishment. We think the Israelites incredibly foolish as well as sinful, for invoking on their heads, in preference to his promises, the vengeance of an insulted God. Let us pray to Him to keep us from a choice more preposterous still, viz. that of eternal death, when life everlasting is the blessed alternative.

MARY. God forbid we should, Mama. But the Israelites wanted to make a captain, and return to Egypt. Did they think God would guide

them back, and give them manna, and water, and all, to rebel against him?

MAMA. I suppose they did, Mary, "as he sendeth rain on the just and unjust, and maketh his sun to rise on the evil and unthankful," among ourselves. But strange, and never to be enough admired forbearance of God! we do not find that temporal sustenance was withheld from even that perverse and incorrigible people, whom he commanded (instead of permitting) to retrace their steps from the confines of plenty and freedom, to the very threshold of their coveted "house of bondage." Miracles of mercy continued to attest God's power, if not his favour to his people; for what says Moses of this very period of destitution of God's spiritual presence? "Thy foot did not swell, nor thy raiment wax old, for forty years;" so miraculously did God even "in judgment, remember mercy!"

How did Moses and Aaron, and the two faithful spies, try to work on the better feelings of their countrymen?

MARY. "They fell on their faces before them,"—oh! Mama, how could they stand that?—and begged them not to rebel against God, and told them not to fear the people of the land, because the Lord was with them.

MAMA. And what was the requital of this benevolent importunity?

MARY. "They bade stone them with stones!"

MAMA. Methinks Moses at least might almost without blasphemy have applied to himself the words of our blessed Lord, when similarly threatened, "Many good works have I wrought among you, for which of them do ye stone me?" But how were these courageous servants of God more effectually vindicated?

MARY. The glory of the Lord appeared in their behalf, and God said, "How long will this people provoke me?" and He offered again to cut them off, and make a great nation of Moses.

MAMA. Which Moses, as formerly, declined; partly from lingering love for his brethren, but chiefly, as before, from that paramount regard for the glory and renown of Jehovah, which Christians would do well to make, like him, the governing principle of their lives! How delicately and skilfully does he recall God's own gracious character of Himself as "long-suffering, and of great mercy," to incline him once more to forgive "iniquity and transgression!" But let us observe, Mary, how, even when remitting, at Moses' entreaty, the threatened cutting off of the nation by pestilence—the Lord vindicates his honour,

in the prolonged punishment, and final exclusion from Canaan, of all those men who had seen His glory and miracles, and ten times provoked Him by their ungrateful rebellion. Not one of them was to "see the land which He sware unto their fathers,"—"their carcases were to fall in the wilderness," and their unhappy children were to be visited for their fathers' sins, by forty years' delay in possessing their well nigh forfeited inheritance. Let this awful decree convince us, Mary, that "God is not mocked," nor his promises undervalued with impunity,—nor let the measure of temporal forbearance, or even prosperity enjoyed by despisers, ever blind us to their ultimate and infallible doom beyond the grave. As surely as no grown man who disbelieved God in the wilderness should go over Jordan, and taste of the plenty of Canaan—shall no scoffer who denies or neglects the Gospel, ever cross the "great gulf" which is "fixed" between them, who, by their sentiments and practices, have "made God a liar," and those, who, believing "the truth as it is in Jesus," have "a right to the water and tree of life."

Were there any exceptions to God's awful doom of exclusion?

MARY. Yes, Caleb and Joshua. They were

to go into the promised land at the end of the forty years, and they "lived still" when God cut off by the plague the ten other spies.

MAMA. From which signal instance of vengeance on the chief offenders, we may learn how peculiar is the guilt of those, who, by word or example, lead others into sin. In the falsehood and cowardice of the spies lay the whole root of Israel's transgression, and justly were they made exceptions from the nation's reprieve. How long were these respited offenders to wander, a joint monument of God's anger and mercy, in the wilderness?

MARY. Forty years, Mama; a year for every day that they had searched the land.

MAMA. From this as well as many parts of Scripture we may gather a correspondence, to us as yet mysterious, between guilt and its measure of punishment; and though we know that the sufferings of eternity will bear to the sins of time a proportion frightfully exceeding that of years to days in the chastisement of Israel, yet the one may serve to remind us of the other, and make us hesitate to purchase even years of misery, by moments, at best, of sinful indulgence.

One circumstance more is recorded for our

edification in the chapters we have read. Did the Israelites humbly acquiesce in the mitigated sentence of their Divine lawgiver?

MARY. No, no; they wanted to go forward and fight *now*, when God had forbidden them.

MAMA. And with what success did they insult Him by a mock semblance of obedience?

MARY. Oh! they were beaten by the Amalekites and Canaanites, just as they had said they should be.

MAMA. And why?

MARY. Because the ark of God, and Moses, never went out of the camp, and God was "not among them."

MAMA. My dear Mary, this is not the least striking of those symbolical events which an apostle tells us "are written unto us for ensamples!" As surely as the Israelites going forth in their own strength, and neglectful, nay forsaken of God, had their presumption rebuked by falling before their temporal enemies—shall we, for whom armour of proof is provided in the Gospel, and a banner set up there, which to follow is certain conquest, be utterly discomfited, in the unauthorized and unhallowed struggle which some vainly pretend to maintain with the corruptions of nature, and assaults of the powers of darkness!

Apart from God and his ark, the Israelites (like Samson when sin had robbed him of his symbolical strength) were powerless; and so is every Christian who has not said with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me;" "and the life I now lead in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

MORNING THIRTEENTH.

LESSON.—Numbers, Chapters xv. (from verse 32), xvi. and xvii.

MAMA. Our reading to-day, my dear Mary, has been throughout of an unusually painful and appalling character, consisting almost wholly of the recorded judgments of God on offenders, obstinate and impenitent indeed, but "men of like passions with ourselves," and, as such, objects of unconscious and not unnatural sympathy. I knew from your grave countenance and pitying tone while reading, that thoughts were passing through your young mind, which, if they did not exactly dare to question, led you to wonder at the severity manifested in these Divine dispensations; and as the sure result of every careful examination of them is, (as our great poet says,) to "vindicate the ways of God to man,"—I shall be glad to hear how they struck you, before using

my humble endeavours to put them in a proper light.

MARY. Mama, I *did* think it a little hard that the man should be stoned to death for gathering a few sticks on a Sunday. You said the other day, out of the Bible, that it was "made for man."

MAMA. Yes, my dear, but surely not for man to disobey his Creator on. I observe habit has made you talk of "Sunday" as applied to the Jewish Sabbath; were they the same?

MARY. No, no, I forgot. The Jews kept the seventh day, because God rested on it from his work; but we keep the first instead, because Christ rose upon it from the dead.

MAMA. Very well remembered. But is this the only difference between the two Sabbaths?

MARY. I don't know—only people are not put to death now for doing worse things than gathering sticks.

MAMA. In this answer, my dear, you have unconsciously comprised what I was going to remark as the leading difference of all the institutions of the law, as contrasted with their Gospel counterparts. The law ran ever—"do this and live;" transgress and die. The Sabbath of the Jews was a positive enactment of their law, and as such, enforced by temporal penalties.

The Christian Sabbath is, no doubt, of at least equally binding obligation; but it is likewise, as we said lately, a blessed privilege—the forfeiture of which is its own worst penalty here,—and which, in the new and better dispensation we live under, will have its abuse visited, not by the brief vengeance of an earthly magistrate, but by the everlasting displeasure of our heavenly Benefactor. But to satisfy you that even under a sterner rule of duty, God "in judgment remembered mercy," turn back to the 27th verse of the 15th chapter, and see what a gracious provision is there made for *sins of ignorance!* Not only is it mercifully said, that such "shall be forgiven," —not only is their atonement condescendingly pointed out,—but, with the spirit of benevolence which I shall ere long show you runs through all the law of Moses, are that class of people specially included who were most likely *ignorantly* to transgress, viz. the "strangers," who dwelt among the Israelites—the "mixed multitude," who, you remember, accompanied them from Egypt. Do you not think, after all this warning, that God had a right to say, "The soul that sinneth *presumptuously, reproacheth the Lord?*" Because he hath *despised* the word of the Lord, that soul shall be utterly cut off—his iniquity shall be upon him?" Remember, Mary, it was

not for "gathering sticks," but for despising God's commandment, that the Sabbath-breaker in the wilderness suffered death; and also that this wholesome severity probably saved hundreds from the guilt of Sabbath-breaking on earth, and its more awful penalties beyond the grave.

MARY. I see, Mama, it was foolish in me to think God *could* be too strict with any one; but I could not help being sorry too, for the poor wives and little ones of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, when the earth opened and swallowed them up.

MAMA. My dear child, when you have lived a little longer in the world, you will see that innocent children daily suffer, in ways as certain, though not so palpable, for the sins and follies of their wicked parents. But you will be glad to hear that learned men have found reason to hope, on careful investigation of the history, that one at least of these devoted families, escaped the fate of its presumptuous head. To understand their grounds for this, and strengthen our sense of the divine justice, as well as majesty, we had better trace this whole iniquitous rebellion to its corrupt fountain—the pride which lost the angels heaven, and our first parents paradise. Who was its impious leader Korah?

MARY. "The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi."

MAMA. Yes, and cousin-german to Moses and Aaron—a circumstance which, while it deepened his guilt, was probably its chief occasion.

MARY. How so? I thought all the sons of Levi were made holy to God.

MAMA. They were so; and don't you see that very holiness brought forward by Korah as a plea for equality with his more highly favoured kinsmen? He is not the first or last who has thus abused privileges to his own destruction; and the one assigned to the family of Kohath, (as *next* to that of Aaron), of carrying the ark and Holy of holies, was probably at the bottom of his whole attempted usurpation of the priestly office. Indeed Moses expressly hints at this, when reproaching Korah with what chiefly grieved *him* in the whole transaction, viz. its deep ingratitude to the God who had thus distinguished them both. What says he at the 9th verse?

MARY. "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord——and seek ye the priesthood also?" "For which cause thou and all thy com-

pany are gathered together against the Lord; and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against *him?*"

MAMA. Bear this in mind, Mary: it was not Aaron they insulted, but God, else their punishment might have been disproportioned to the offence. We have now, from our sad experience of human nature, accounted for Korah's impious vying with his cousin. Let us search into the history and probable motives of Dathan and Abiram, his partners in revolt. Who were they?

MARY. "Sons of Reuben," Mama.

MAMA. And had the sons of Reuben any possible claim to the priesthood?

MARY. None that I know of.

MAMA. No; but as descendants of Jacob's eldest son, it is supposed they aspired to the temporal rule over the people, which God had seen fit, in his wisdom, to confer on his servant Moses. So you see both his ecclesiastical and civil appointments were arraigned by this knot of desperate rebels. What test did Moses propose for vindicating the former?

MARY. He bid Korah and his company take censers on the morrow, and offer incense, and God would "show who are His."

MAMA. Whom did he mean by Korah's "company?"

MARY. I suppose the "two hundred and fifty princes of the Assembly," who were as bad as himself, but ought to have known better.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, they are called here "famous in the congregation, men of renown;" but renowned, alas! in our day for nothing but pre-eminence in wickedness, and the awfulness of its merited punishment—for if ever there were presumptuous sinners in the world, such were surely those infatuated "leaders in Israel!" How did Dathan and Abiram, who did not pretend to the priest's office, show *their* contempt of God and Moses?

MARY. They would not "come up" when Moses sent for them; and it really looked as if they meant to mock God, for they called *Egypt* a "land flowing with milk and honey," the very words *He* always used when speaking of Canaan!

MAMA. I am quite glad you noticed this aggravation of their heinous ingratitude. Not content with the falsehood of accusing Moses of making *himself* a prince, they charge him with evil intentions towards themselves; a charge which all his meekness could not enable him to bear unruffled, though, as usual, his appeal is from man to God. Though "very wroth," he does not—as the authority intrusted to him fully warranted—apprehend and execute these traitor-

ous rebels: he does not even invoke vengeance on them from the Lord. His worst wish—wrung from him by flagrant injustice—is, that God "would not respect their offering!" From this we may learn that in the awful judgment which followed, he was merely the reluctant minister of the Higher Power to whom he had referred the case. But the history brings us back to Korah and his accomplices. What was the result of *their* presumptuous intrusion on the priestly office of Aaron? Had they no abettors in it?

MARY. I am afraid a great many. It says "Korah gathered all the congregation against Moses and Aaron."

MAMA. Yes, Mary, so wide and rapid is the contagion of evil example; and so nearly did it involve a whole people in destruction, that God had actually warned Moses and Aaron to separate from this people, "that he might consume them in a moment!"

MARY. But these good men fell on their faces and prayed; and the people had time and warning given them to get away. What a mercy it was they did it! but how dreadfully daring of Dathan and Abiram to stand in their very tent doors, defying God, with their wives and children about them!

MAMA. Yes, Mary; and this very hardened

defiance caused the deaths of those dearest to them; for, (as I said before,) Korah's family are supposed to have escaped, by the object of *his* rebellion being the priesthood, and its scene the door of the tabernacle at a distance from his own tents,—while the proud pretenders to temporal sovereignty in Israel involved the very posterity whose claims they wished to advance in the doom they thus provoked! How was this dreadful doom announced?

MARY. Moses said—"Hereby shall ye know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all mankind, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord."

MAMA. Let us "understand" it also, my dear; and beware, from this awful lesson, lest by provoking the same God, we open for ourselves an abyss, of which the pit that closed on these men is but a faint and feeble image! Let us, while the "cry of them" yet resounds in our ears, adopt—but in a more Christian and less

slavish spirit—the example and exclamation of "all Israel," and flee all participation in their sins, "lest the earth swallow us up also." A different, but not less frightful doom seems to have awaited the intruders within the precincts of the sanctuary—fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. Let us learn from this, Mary, how unwelcome, nay abhorrent to God, is all worship springing from corrupt, nay unauthorized sources. Of this last we have in this history another proof, which, (as occurring in the omitted book of Leviticus,) I am glad to have an opportunity of mentioning here; to show that even the favoured posterity of Aaron were not secure either against transgressions or chastisement. Nadab and Abihu, his two sons—youths so highly distinguished as to be permitted to attend their father and Moses on Mount Sinai—either presumptuously or carelessly used "strange" (that is unhallowed) "fire" in their ministrations in the sanctuary; and were struck dead for it, precisely like the more outrageous offenders here. So completely will the "jealous God" with whom we have to do, show himself "a consuming fire" to all who substitute a worship and religion of their own, for the mediation and atonement He has graciously but *peremptorily* appointed. How

was this signal vengeance to be commemorated to succeeding generations?

MARY. The "censers" of these wicked men were to be picked out of the burning "because they were hallowed," and made into plates for God's altar; to remind the people that "no stranger, not of the seed of Aaron, should come nigh to offer incense before the Lord." Mama! I can scarce believe my eyes. Next morning all the congregation "murmured against Moses and Aaron," and said *they* had killed God's people! Were they mad?

MAMA. Neither more nor less so than the "fool who hath said *in his heart* there is no God" —for such surely was the practical inference to be drawn from their insane contempt of warnings! Did even Moses now continue to pray for his infatuated countrymen?

MARY. No, Mama; but he bid Aaron take fire from the altar, and go quickly, and make an atonement, for the plague was begun.

MAMA. And the efficacy of the expedient proves it to have been from God, like that greater atonement which, blessed be His name, He hath provided for us. Nor can Scripture afford a livelier image either of our undone condition and imminent peril on the one hand, or our wonderful deliverance by the sacrifice of Christ on

the other,—than is presented by Aaron's running into the midst of the devoted congregation, and standing with the consecrated censer in his hands, " between the living and the dead," arresting, in its mid career of destruction, the pestilence which had already sealed the doom of " fourteen thousand " souls!

If any thing could have been wanting to confirm, in the eyes of the Israelites, the proof of God's choice of Aaron afforded by the acceptance of his atoning incense,—the miracle of his rod alone budding while those of the other tribes remained dry and sapless, would afford to the mind of a gross and carnal people, a continual testimony of his selection for the priesthood. Accordingly, long after the rod itself, with the other contents of the ark, were lost, the Jews preserved the memory of the miraculous rod by striking it on some of their coins.

The " murmurings " of the rebels seem, by this decisive testimony, to have been, for a time at least, silenced and suppressed; and not long after we shall find the much-tried object of them, the venerable Aaron, resigning at once his life and office for a better world, and " more enduring priesthood."

In the mean time, let us draw from this day's lesson deep and humbling reflections of the dan-

ger of spiritual pride, and the temptations peculiar to the professing servants of God. That very descent from Levi and nearness to the altar and its offices, which formed the boast of "Korah and his company," caused their memorable fall; and many are there among us to whom this fall may read a solemn lesson.

"*We are all holy*," said the ambitious usurping sons of Kohath, because, thanks to their birth and God's favour to their tribe, their honoured hands had often borne aloft, in the sight of the people, the ark of Jehovah's immediate presence. Better had it been for them never to have enjoyed the envied distinction, than by abusing it as they did, to question God's appointments, outrage his authority, and profane, with mad ambition, his violated sanctuary! But yet "more tolerable in the day of judgment" will it be for them than for us, if with clearer light and gospel advantages we presume on *any* degree of supposed sanctity, or ground of acceptance with God, that shall supersede His sole Mediator, and set at nought that "great High Priest" of whom Aaron was but the humble and fallible earthly representative!

MORNING FOURTEENTH.

LESSON.—Numbers, Chapters xx. and xxi.

MAMA. We have, in the beginning of this day's reading, the melancholy yet instructive spectacle of the chosen nation, whom in the strength of their God we had triumphantly accompanied to the threshold of the promised land, once more wanderers on the confines of Egypt, and sojourners in Kadesh; one of the names of which latter station, viz. that of "Barnea," signifies, we are told, the "son of wandering." I hope you remember what it was that thus overclouded their bright prospects, and cast them forth once more into the desert, where the miraculous support they had so ill deserved, alone enabled them to exist as monuments alike of the Divine justice and mercy. How did they, (like Esau, of whose descendants we have read today), forfeit their birth-right, and bring on themselves these calamities?

MARY. Oh! we read about it the other day. They believed the wicked spies rather than God, and "would not go up to possess the good land he had given them."

MAMA. Very well remembered, if you have made the important application, that want of faith is equally the bar to the enjoyment of spiritual privileges. God has given us a "better country, even an heavenly," and raised up faithful witnesses, like Caleb and Joshua, to testify its infinite value, and the "access" we all may have to it by the "one true and living way;" and shall the close of life find us, like the Israelites, unprofitable wanderers in the wilderness of sin, which, like them, we had but to "call on our God," and bid adieu to for ever?

What eminent person first paid the penalty which disobedience had entailed on *all* that generation, save Caleb and Joshua?

MARY. Miriam, Mama. She must have been of a great age, for she was old enough to watch by the river when Moses was a little baby. I remember how cleverly she managed getting him nursed by his own mother.

MAMA. Yes, it is supposed she was then twelve years old, and by her prudent conduct at that period, she certainly contributed, under Providence, to the religious nurture of her brother's

infant years. She died "full of days," at the age of one hundred and thirty, four months before Aaron and eleven before Moses; and was buried, Josephus tells us, with great solemnity, while later writers say, her sepulchre at Kadesh was to be seen in their time.

What trial soon after proved the people to have profited little by their thirty-seven years' experience of God's bounty in their daily sustenance?

MARY. There was no water; but they need not have minded that I am sure. They knew that Moses could get it from God for a word.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, but *they forgot* it. Do you never, never forget that there is a "living water" more essential still to your nourishment and growth in grace, which a "greater than Moses" can and will provide for you, would *you* yourself but say the "word" which alone can make the gracious fountain flow? What says its heavenly and compassionate guardian Christ himself on this humbling backwardness? "Ye *will not* come to me that ye might have life."

Did the Israelites, in pious remembrance of God's former miracle, now confidently apply to Moses for relief?

MARY. No; they "chode with him," and said, "Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord." How wicked, Mama!

They need not have been in such a hurry, for God *had* said they were all to die in the wilderness. And how could they say Moses had brought them there, when it was their own unbelief and disobedience?

MAMA. Just as we all lay our misfortunes and sufferings on any cause but the sins of which they are the necessary consequence. Was it Moses's fault that they were in this "evil place," and not in a "land of seed, and figs, and vines, and pomegranates," even Canaan; where they and their children might have been peaceably established, and reaping, not only the fruit of their own, but of other nations' industry and diligence? How did Moses at first reply to their false insinuations?

MARY. As he always did, by "falling on his face before God."

MAMA. Well had it been for him, if the same spirit of humility had governed all parts of this unfortunate transaction! What instructions was God graciously pleased to give him?

MARY. He was to take the rod——

MAMA. What rod?

MARY. Oh! I suppose the same which he turned to a serpent in Egypt, and dried the Red Sea with.

MAMA. How had it been so long preserved?

MARY. By being laid up in the ark. It says after, that he took it "from before the Lord."

MAMA. And how was he commanded to use it on the present occasion? Was he to strike with it, as formerly, upon the rock, and so bring water?

MARY. No, he was only to speak to the rock. I wonder why the change was ordered, and God so angry when the rock was struck instead.

MAMA. Various good reasons may be assigned, were *any* necessary to prove disobedience (in a lawgiver especially) to be of itself inexcusable. Had the rod uniformly been made the instrument of procuring water, so gross and ignorant a people as the Jews would, in all probability, have come to pay it superstitious veneration; and (besides the unquestionable propriety of God's vindicating His authority when transgressed by so eminent a person in the face of the whole congregation), it is highly probable that Moses's rebuke and punishment on this occasion—his evident fallibility as a sinful mortal, and prohibition from entering Canaan—were all designed to guard against the idolatrous worship of this great leader, into which (after the example of almost every heathen nation) the Jews would, in after ages, have been so ready to fall.

But, in addition to the mere transgression of

the *letter* of God's command, there was, in the *spirit* of Moses's conduct in this solitary instance, a want both of meekness and faith, which, as contrasted with the tenor of his life, is at once humiliating and instructive. How did he address, not the rock, which he was commanded to speak to—but the people, for whose faults he had heretofore manifested an almost Christian tenderness?

MARY. "How now, ye rebels! must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Mama, this sounds proud and haughty, and not like good Moses at all.

MAMA. True, Mary; and from this unusual and unbecoming heat and arrogance of temper arose probably the wilful deviation which followed, from God's express command. It is supposed that want of faith accompanied (as it generally does) the failure in obedience, and his striking the rock *twice* has been interpreted into doubt and distrust of God. Be this as it may, sure we are that the transgression which lost Moses Canaan was no light or trivial one, and must have contained in it something peculiarly offensive to God. How indeed does the offended Jehovah himself imply the want of faith to which we have alluded?

MARY. He says, "*Because ye believe me not,* to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of

Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Oh! Mama, I am sorry for Moses. Did he not beg God to forgive him for this time?

MAMA. That he did! as you will learn from his own affecting words in Deuteronomy. But it might not be. The "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," though it "availeth much," cannot always turn away the temporal judgments of God; for you remember Paul besought thrice in vain that his "thorn in the flesh" might be removed, and our blessed Lord himself that this "cup might pass from him." But the same spirit of pious submission which made Him add, "not my will, but Thine"—we may hope supported (though in a far inferior degree) the grievously humbled and disappointed leader of Israel. Did the disobedience of Moses frustrate the miracle?

MARY. No, no; "the waters came out abundantly." I wonder God did not punish the people by withholding them. They were the cause of Moses' sin.

MAMA. What would have become in that case of their innocent little ones, and those beasts, of whose wants God is so tenderly mindful? Besides, you forget His glory, the chief end of all his wonders in the wilderness. It was that Jehovah might be "sanctified" and had in honour,

both that the people "drank abundantly," and Moses was rebuked; and it is that we may take warning by the transaction, that the venerable sufferer himself has so touchingly recorded it; while his more vain-glorious historian, Josephus, totally omits so humiliating a slur on his nation's lawgiver.

Over whom did the "king of Edom" reign, of whose inhospitality to Israel we next read? Why is he called his "brother?"

MARY. You told me the Edomites were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob.

MAMA. Well remembered; and it was on that account (though it aggravated the insolent unkindness of their conduct) that the Israelites, by God's command, simply, nay humbly, asked permission to pass through the land, paying for the very water they drank; and when harshly refused and threatened, abstained from chastising Edom. It is said elsewhere of this event, that "because of God's ancient covenant" with Isaac, Israel should not "take so much as a *footsbreadth* of land from the posterity of Esau." Oh! Mary, what does this gracious adherence to temporal promises, even in favour of a "despiser" like Esau, give us reason to hope for, if we, through the appointed channel, but put in our claims to the spiritual possessions we are heirs to!

What melancholy event occurred on "Mount Hor" on the borders of Edom?

MARY. Poor old Aaron died, for his share of the disobedience at Meribah. How sad he must have felt when his priestly garments were stript off! Only he had a son to succeed him, and Joshua was a stranger to Moses.

MAMA. To his blood certainly; but a son in love and tenderness, and, what was more material in the eye of a true servant of God, closely allied to him in piety, fidelity, and zeal for the Lord. There was something vastly solemn and impressive in the circumstance of Moses and Eleazar ascending Mount Hor with their dying kinsman in the sight of all the congregation, and returning bereaved and alone, from their melancholy pilgrimage! It is thought God purposely left uncertain the place of interment of both the brother patriarchs, lest in after ages superstitious honours should be paid to their remains. Both went up, at the command of God, to high mountains, in an unfrequented desert, put off, like Aaron, their garments of mortality, and ascended to "their Father and our Father, to their God and our God."

But we are anticipating the decease of Moses. What symbolical action, the most strikingly figurative perhaps in the whole Bible, of the effi-

cacy of faith in Christ,—was he spared to perform, before he "went hence and was no more seen?"

MARY. Setting up the brazen serpent, Mama, that whoever looked at it might be cured of the fiery serpent's bite.

MAMA. What had brought this dreadful visitation on the people?

MARY. Oh! the old sin of speaking against God and Moses, and murmuring, and loathing manna; besides, it says, they were "much discouraged" by the length of the way.

MAMA. And what but their sins had involved them in its tedious distressing mazes, and prevented their enjoying, forty years sooner, the rest and abundance of Canaan? Strange! that in all their sinful reflections on God and his chosen instruments, not one is ever pointed against themselves, the sole authors and guilty aggravators of every calamity of their pilgrimage! But though "much people of Israel died," did God, in deserved indignation, leave the whole nation a prey to the fury of the serpents?

MARY. Oh! no; when they owned they had sinned, and prayed to Him, He caused Moses to make a serpent of brass, that they might look upon it and live.

MAMA. Never forget, Mary, in reading the

record of this equally striking and merciful expedient, whose authority we have for saying that "as the serpent of brass was lifted up in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever looketh on him should not perish but have everlasting life." The parallel in this instance between the type and its fulfilment is more than usually close, so that "he who runs may read it." We have in each the object for which the "sign" was graciously appointed, viz. a triumph over sin and its consequences in the person of its old representative, the "serpent"—the "lifting up" of it in the sight of all the people—and, above all, that indispensable condition of "looking towards it," with the bodily eye, (as in the case of the Christian with that of faith,) without which a temporal or spiritual cure would be alike hopeless and impossible. Never forget that He who graciously pointed out the analogy for our instruction, was pleased to add, "and I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto me." Shall we be of those who frustrate, to their own eternal ruin, this merciful declaration; making (as far as our finite means extend) the "counsel of God of none effect," and "doing despite" to that "Spirit of grace" by whom the merciful prediction was dictated? May that God who devised alike the one remedy for sin, and its

earthly symbol in the wilderness—and that Saviour who "bruised" on Calvary the "head of the serpent," whose malice he defeated in the recovery of the Israelites—and that Holy Spirit who recorded both for our instruction—sanctify both to our eternal salvation; that having "looked unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" here, we may "see him as he is" through the ages of eternity, in the Canaan above!

MORNING FIFTEENTH.

LESSON.—Numbers, Chapters xxii. xxiii. and xxiv.

MAMA. The length of our yesterday's reading, and superior importance of the more spiritual topics suggested by the mention of the Brazen Serpent, have caused us to pass over some subsequent particulars of the vengeance which Israel, by the permission and with the aid of Jehovah, executed on the kings of the Amorites and of Bashan, a glance over which will account for the alarm of Balak, the son of Zippor. Who was he, my dear?

MARY. The king of Moab.

MAMA. And from whom did I tell you Moab was descended?

MARY. From Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

MAMA. On which account it does not appear that Israel had as yet any commission to attack or annoy Moab. But why was Balak's panic natural? Look back to the end of the last chapter, and see how Israel—not without just

provocation—treated Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites.

MARY. They smote them and their sons, and people, till there was none left alive. I suppose, then, Mama, the Amorites were no relations to Israel.

MAMA. No. On the contrary, they were of those Canaanite nations whom God, for their wickedness, had determined to cut off. But we must return to Moab. What effect had the slaughter of the Amorites on its king?

MARY. He was "sore afraid" and distressed.

MAMA. And did he—as prudence as well as courtesy would have dictated—send ambassadors to his kinsmen of Israel, to try and gain their friendship, or at least make "conditions of peace with them;" as our Lord in the Gospel remarks, a wise king would do, even when his enemy was "yet afar off?"

MARY. Oh no. He never sent to them at all; but to Balaam the son of Beor; and for such a foolish purpose! To come and curse his enemies for him, as if words could do them any harm!

MAMA. That depended—according to the belief of those times—on the character of the words, and the power of the speaker. What was Balaam?

MARY. I know he was a prophet, though it does not say so here.

MAMA. And if so, and if, (though an unworthy one,) a prophet of the true God; his "words," as you call them, might not be so powerless as you imagine. Did not Elijah's prayer withhold rain for three years, and bring down fire from heaven, on his and God's enemies?

MARY. But then the Israelites were not God's enemies, but his chosen people, and Balaam, as a prophet, must have known it.

MAMA. And in so saying, you have just explained what it was that made his attempted compliance, for the sake of "filthy lucre," with the king of Moab's wishes, so monstrously and unpardonably sinful. The ignorant heathen monarch, who thought to make the kingdom of Heaven (like that of Satan) a "house divided against itself," may find excuse for his folly; but remember that the professing servant of God who would compromise between Him and "Mammon" will incur the sin, and share the punishment of Balaam? What was the nature of the bribes for which he sold his soul?

MARY. I don't know—it only calls them the "rewards of divination" here.

MAMA. Do you recollect any instance where

similar presents were brought to gain the favour of a prophet?

MARY. Oh! yes—Naaman brought quantities of fine clothes, and gold, and silver, to Elisha to cure him.

MAMA. And did Elisha eagerly accept the "rewards," even when no sacrifice of duty or conscience was involved?

MARY. No, Mama. He gave God all the glory, and would take nothing.

MAMA. Very well remembered; and a truer distinction could scarcely have been found between a servant of God and a slave to Mammon. Balaam's eyes glistened at the promised "rewards," and his covetous heart longed to possess them; while conscience, not yet drowned, but perverted, whispered that God would *perhaps*, somehow or other, connive at sin.

MARY. Mama, why did God ask Balaam, "what men are those with thee?" Surely He needed none to tell him that, or any thing else.

MAMA. No, Mary, but He loves, by searching questions, to force us, as it were, to convict ourselves. Would any direct accusation, think you, have been so terrible to Cain, as the simple question, "Where is thy brother Abel?" thus put by the Lord, to whom that brother's

blood had cried from the ground, at the moment it was impiously shed? Balaam, well as he could deceive himself, durst not equivocate with the Most High; and simply related the embassy and its object—God's negative on which he had foreseen, though covetousness sought to blind him to it. What was the decided dictate of the Lord whom he pretended to serve?

MARY. "Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." Mama, Balaam had no excuse, nothing could be plainer.

MAMA. Except the "still small voice" of conscience which we are in the habit (like Balaam) of explaining away every day of our lives; though, if listened to, it as decidedly refuses us leave to sin, as the voice of God (which in truth it is) forbade Balaam to go with the messengers. Even he, sent them away once; and so do we, under the influence of salutary fear, dismiss the first suggestions of evil. But, like Balaam's "princes," or the "strong man armed," of the gospel, they return doubly furnished, to the contest; and if we parley with them, as we are all apt to do, our fall, like his, is certain, and our "latter state," like that of the possessed man in the parable, "is ten times worse than the first."

MARY. But, Mama, Balaam did not behave

so ill; for he said if Balak would "give him his house full of silver and gold" he would not go, unless God allowed him.

MAMA. Oh! the deceitfulness of the human heart, hoping to find a "cloak for its sin," even in the toleration, or withheld interposition of God! Would the Israelites become the less "blessed," or cursing them the less sinful, supposing God no longer directly to interfere?

MARY. Oh, no! Balaam would only try to think so.

MAMA. Just as we do, when inclination and duty renew their daily, nay almost hourly conflict! Instead of perceiving and acknowledging that God has pronounced, and that unalterably—against us—we linger a night "to see" what He (or rather our own sophistry and that of Satan) will "say unto us more;" or from that very silence of the internal monitor, which is in itself a "savour of death," we argue that what was sin yesterday, in the counsels of Jehovah, has become lawful, nay praiseworthy, to-day! Do you think His permission to Balaam to go, proceeded from any change in the nature of the action?

MARY. Oh! no; God only let him go, because by making him bless the people instead of cursing them, he should punish both him and Balak.

MAMA. Very well understood, and clearly expressed, and to be remembered, whenever God, for your chastisement, *ceases to hinder you from doing wrong.* Was He the less displeased with Balaam?

MARY. No. "God's anger was kindled because he went," and "the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him." Surely, Mama, God was good in giving him one more chance to take fright, and turn back.

MAMA. Yes, for no doubt the same power which opened the eyes, as well as loosed the tongue of the dumb animal, could have made the arresting Spirit at once visible to the prophet. But unaccountable, nay miraculous as was the impediment in the way, Balaam *would* see nothing in it but the obstinacy of his never-before refractory beast; on whom he turned all his rage, as we are in the habit of doing, on any erhaps merciful obstacle which stands (or tries stand) between us and destruction.

MARY. It is quite plain, Mama, that nothing uld have convinced Balaam, since the speak- of his ass did not. How *could* an ass be made speak? I have read in my natural history even monkies, (which are much more like) have not the organs necessary to enable to do it.

MAMA. My dear, there is nothing so absurd as trying to *account* for miracles; which, if they could happen naturally would cease to be such. Whether "He who formed the ear, and maketh the deaf and the dumb, and the seeing and the blind," endowed the work of his hands with the necessary powers for "confounding," (as in the case of the false prophet of old and scoffers of our own day,) "the wisdom of the wise"—or whether the reproving voice only appeared, (as is more probable,) to issue from the affrighted animal, is perfectly immaterial. One thing alone is certain, that if we have only this instance in Scripture of brutes being gifted with speech, many are the passages where the Almighty Himself as it were "puts words in their mouth," to rebuke the ingratitude and disobedience of man. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." The tenderness of the Lord of Creation for its inferior part, we have often had occasion to remark; and you will observe that the first words of reproof used by the angel, relate to Balaam's cruelty to his ass. Did the consciousness of this celestial "adversary's" presence not at length alarm Balaam?

MARY. That it did! He even offered to go back—*if it displeased Him.* Mama! he must

have been only pretending still—for he could not doubt that it did.

MAMA. He *was* "pretending," Mary, and that God well knew—but He "is not mocked," and instead of accepting the tardy and insincere repentance of the prophet, let him follow "his own devices," as he thought—but in reality made him an instrument for conveying to heathen nations God's immutable purposes of good towards his chosen people. So sensible, indeed, was even Balaam of this, that he told Balak at once, he had no power to say any thing, but the "word which God should put into his mouth."

MARY. Mama, who were the seven altars to, that Balaam made the king build? I suppose to God.

MAMA. It is imagined so; and yet their being on the "high places of Baal" looks suspicious, as if idolatry, (as well as covetousness, which the Apostle says is one form of it,) lurked in the mind of the treacherous prophet; the more so as his last desperate effort to make the blessing of God on the Israelites "of none effect," was the seducing them to join the Moabites in the worship of Baal. At all events, however, he went out on the present occasion to meet Jehovah, and truly the magnificent words put into his mouth by the God of Israel sufficiently attest their Di-

vine origin. Let their opening be borne in mind when, as children of God, we become exposed to any one's hatred or ill will. In vain shall *any man* "curse whom the Lord hath not cursed or defy whom the Lord hath not defied." What particulars about Israel occur in Balaam's first prophecy?

MARY. Their dwelling "alone," and their great numbers.

MAMA. And have both been remarkably fulfilled?

MARY. Yes; they never mixed, you have told me, with any other nation; and even forty years before this time they went out of Egypt "six hundred thousand men, besides women and children."

MAMA. I am quite glad you recollect and apply so well what you have formerly read. It repays me for all my endeavours to impress it on you. But what remarkable and often quoted wish of a personal nature does the prophetic view of Israel's prosperity draw forth from Balaam?

MARY. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

MAMA. There are few, even among sinners by whom that wish is not echoed, though they would fain combine its fulfilment with a life of sinful indulgence. Do you remember the strik-

ing contrast of Balaam's death with the peaceful end he thus wishes?

MARY. No, Mama; I forget it.

MAMA. After putting the climax to his wickedness by the plot before mentioned for seducing Israel to sin, he was slain in battle by the people he had striven *doubly* to deprive of their blessing. What did he do when first disappointed in cursing them?

MARY. He tried again to please the wicked king from another place, as if places could alter God's opinion! But, Mama, he says, "God had not seen iniquity in Israel;" now, I am sure we have both seen and read of a great deal.

MAMA. True, and how much more must the discerner of hearts have discovered! But in the highly figurative language of this prophecy, "not seeing" in Jehovah, is the same as not "marking," or not "visiting," in other parts of Scripture; or in our own blessed gospel pages, not "imputing" those sins, which the blood of atonement could alone—either before or after the coming of Christ—veil from the eye of Omniscience. God, who "is not a man that He should repent"—having once chosen Israel for his people, and sworn "by Himself" to defend and bless them—would not be turned from his purpose, even by the "iniquity" which cleaves to every fallen

creature, and which—were he "extreme to mark" —no flesh could stand before Him.

We have hardly leisure to analyze minutely all the features of eastern imagery and prophetic sublimity with which the greatness and prosperity of Israel are shadowed forth in these successive predictions. We must hasten to the last, which is often quoted as one of the most magnificent announcements of the future Messiah, inscribed by the finger of God on the prophetic record. How is this most important of all the "visions" of Balaam ushered in?

MARY. "He hath said which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty—I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh."

MAMA. Stop, Mary; what an awful picture does this unconsciously give of the future state of that apostate prophet, who, though the favoured instrument of such communications to others, and "knowing the knowledge of the Most High"—was doomed to expiate the abuse of these vast privileges by eternal distance and separation from the very Saviour whose kingdom and glory he predicted! Under what lofty images does he personify the Redeemer?

MARY. "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel."

MAMA. Though the minute particulars of the victories ascribed to this illustrious person have caused this prophecy to be primarily applied to David—all expositors agree in referring its ultimate accomplishment to the Messiah; so much so, that an impostor (one of the false Christs foretold by our Lord) took the name of "Son of the Star"—while the announcement of the true Deliverer's birth by a "star in the east" lends a sanction to the received application of these noble images to *Him* who—beheld like a "star" afar off by those kings and prophets who only "desired to see" those things with which our eyes have been blessed—now shines upon us in the meridian splendour of the "Sun of Righteousness."

MORNING SIXTEENTH.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters i. ii. and iii.

MAMA. The book of Deuteronomy, at which, by the omission, as usual, of the ordinances, genealogies, and local regulations contained in the latter part of that of Numbers, we have arrived, is so called from two words signifying a "repetition of the law;" and is rendered very interesting to us, as well as the Jews, by the touching circumstances under which it was delivered by Moses, just before his decease, to his beloved countrymen, and the affectionate energy with which it recapitulates their many deliverances, and enforces the corresponding duties of gratitude and obedience.

Nor was this summary of God's former precepts and miracles a mere gratuitous effusion of the dying lawgiver's good-will to the nation he had so long led as a shepherd. Most of those who witnessed the departure from Egypt, or

heard the promulgation of the law on Sinai, were dead; and a generation had sprung up, to whom a rehearsal of God's mighty works and perfect commandments must have been anything but superfluous. We all require, my dear Mary, to be reminded of the majesty, the justice, and long-suffering of Jehovah; and nowhere shall we find them more forcibly displayed, or irresistibly enforced, as motives of human conduct, than in the lawgiver of Israel's parting address to his countrymen.

At what point in their journey Canaanward had the Israelites arrived, when this remarkable exhortation was delivered?

MARY. It says they were in a plain "over against the Red Sea." Surely they had not gone all that way back again.

MARY. No, Mary; that is a mistake of transcribers. But at God's command, and to punish their disobedience, they did, as we have read, retrace their weary steps as far as Kadesh. How far does the second verse say that place was from Horeb?

MARY. Only eleven days' journey. What a little way!

MAMA. And yet how long did their wanderings within this limited space judicially continue?

MARY. Forty years, Mama,—to teach them to distrust God.

MAMA. Right; let it teach us to avoid their sin of unbelief. What does the 6th verse say relative to their original sojourn in Horeb?

MARY. God said to them, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount."

MAMA. Do you know how long that was?

MARY. No.

MAMA. About one year after the promulgation of the law from its lofty pinnacle; during which time they erected their tabernacle, numbered their people, and regulated their order of march, and (had they listened to the gracious encouragement given in the 8th verse of our chapter, "Go ye in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers,") might have been in the space of one short month established residents in the land of promise. But distrust and disobedience frustrated God's gracious designs, and deprived all that generation (Moses not excepted) of their share in the earthly Canaan. These things were written for our instruction, to whom is held out, by the same God, a "better country, even an heavenly." Did you observe, as you went along, the affecting ejaculation which Moses utters, when alluding to the

great number of his people, and his incapacity "to bear them all alone?"

MARY. Oh! yes; "The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as you are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!"

MAMA. Besides the ardent patriotism implied in these words, the occurrence of them and many similar apostrophes, lends to this book of Deuteronomy almost the charm of personal communication with the venerable patriarch, instead of a dry written record. At the same time, this very conversational nature, and our previous acquaintance with the transactions to which it refers, will give to our remarks on it somewhat of the same desultory irregular character. Instead of following the recapitulation as minutely as we did the former narrative, we will content ourselves with dwelling on its more prominent features; and above all, appropriating, if possible, to our own improvement, their moral application.

When you read over just now the account given here of the disgraceful rebellion on the return of the spies, did you observe the omission of any particular related in Numbers?

MARY. Stay, let me see. Yes, Mama, Moses never says a word here of God offering to discard the Jews, and make of him a "great nation"

instead. That was pretty of him, and like himself.

MAMA. Yes; affection induces him now, on his death-bed, as it were, to suppress a mortifying fact, which truth did not allow him to omit recording at the time. Why does he allege at the 27th verse, that the people "murmured in their tents?"

MARY. For too foolish a reason, Mama, as well as sinful! They said God brought them out of Egypt "because he hated them, and to destroy them." How could they either think or say so?

MAMA. Just, my dear, as many, whom God sent his only Son to die for and redeem, not only doubt his love, but actually choose to be objects of his wrath and aversion! Some—like the Israelites—to avoid making the exertions which an admission of God's readiness to assist them would render indispensable; and others, from a guilty despondence, and low estimate of the value of that blood of atonement which is able to cleanse "from all sin." How did Moses rebuke this unpardonable cowardice in the Israelites?

MARY. "Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God which goeth before you, He shall fight for you."

MAMA. And for us too, Mary, if we go for-

ward in his strength. By what affecting comparison does Moses set forth His long-suffering?

MARY. "The Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went. Yet in this thing did ye not believe the Lord your God."

MAMA. Aye, Mary, there lay the root of the evil; in the unbelief which made alike the threatenings of God and his promises of "none effect" in the wilderness. Did the rebellion of the Israelites affect none but its own guilty participators?

MARY. Moses says, "God was angry with him for their sakes, and would not let him go in thither." I don't exactly see what they had to do with it.

MAMA. We have the Psalmist's authority, (as well as Moses' own former account of the transaction,) for ascribing to their continued provocation, that "speaking unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of strife," which occasioned his exclusion from Canaan. Have you ever thought, Mary, how, by exasperating the evil tempers, or even severely trying the patience of those with whom you have to do—you could become a partaker in the faults to which your own unreasonableness gave rise? It is very wrong, even on any provocation, to lose sight of Christian gen-

tleness, but in this as in many other cases, we may say, "Woe unto him by whom the offence cometh."

What portion of the generation who offended God, were exempted from the sentence of exclusion?

MARY. "Their little ones," whom they had said "should be a prey."

MAMA. And for what reason?

MARY. "Because in that day they had no knowledge between good and evil."

MAMA. A title to exemption which none but infants so circumstanced can ever plead. What is said in the Gospel, Mary, of such as we, who "know our Master's will, and do it not?"

MARY. They "shall be beaten with many stripes;" but it even says, "he who knew it not, shall be beaten with few." That seems hard—harder than God showed himself in Old Testament times!

MAMA. Because, my dear, in the Gospel times in which we live, and among Christian nations, nearly all ignorance on the great points of faith and duty must be more or less wilful. Where it is involuntary, He who graciously excepted the "little ones" of Israel from a nation's rejection, and spared Nineveh for the sake of its *infant* population, will, we may believe, remit (for

the sake of Him who was "wounded for our transgressions") even the "few stripes" of the unconscious offender.

What ignominious circumstance does Moses say accompanied the Israelites' wilful determination to fight, after they were abandoned by their God?

MARY. "The Amorites chased them as bees do." This was not to be wondered at; but, Mama, I wonder why, when "they returned and wept before the Lord," He would not hear them?

MAMA. A double and awful lesson is contained in these words; and I am glad they awakened your attention. In the first place, the tears of Israel were probably extorted by defeat and worldly mortification, rather than any true penitence and regard for displeasing God. But even had it been otherwise—it is the awful tendency of all Scripture admonitions to remind us, that there is a period beyond which the abused long-suffering of God may be invoked in vain. Though the cases of the labourers called at the "eleventh hour," and of the thief on the cross, are designed to obviate despair, what does the Gospel say happened, while the "foolish virgins," who had too late awaked, went to provide themselves with oil?

MARY. "The door was shut."

MAMA. Awful words! when we consider the eternity to which they relate! And was it opened on their clamorous supplication?

MARY. No, no; they were shut out for ever.

MAMA. So will it be with many who have trifled with their day of grace and ample opportunities. Let us beware lest we increase the unhappy number.

What did we remark of the transaction to which the second of our chapters refers, between Israel and his brethren the children of Esau?

MARY. That God would not give Israel a "footbreadth of their land," because of his promise to Esau.

MAMA. And why were the Ammonites not to be "distressed?"

MARY. On account of their good forefather Lot.

MAMA. This was surely "showing mercy on thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments." But as Esau had no such claim on God's forbearance towards his descendants, we must look, in their case, for another motive, viz. the respect of "Him who cannot lie" for his own immutable promise.

What gracious purpose towards His people *does he resume*, when the whole generation who

had distrusted Him were consumed and dead? You will find it at the 25th verse.

MARY. "This day will I begin to put the dread of thee, and the fear of thee, upon the nations."

MAMA. Had we any remarkable instance of this lately?

MARY. Oh! yes; in the history of Balak, which we read yesterday. He was horribly frightened, for, though God did not intend Israel to "distress Moab," I suppose he did not know it.

MAMA. Yet Sihon, who had much more real reason to be alarmed, chose to fight, though Moses had sent him "a message of peace." Such is the inconsistency of the wicked; at one time alarmed, "where no fear is," at another rushing with headlong fury (as the prophet sublimely expresses it) "on the thick bosses of the buckler of the Almighty."

MARY. Mama, I am glad you explained to me about God hardening Pharaoh's heart, because it says here again that *He* made "Sihon's heart obstinate."

MAMA. I am glad you remarked the similarity of the cases. Both, being incorrigible offenders, were abandoned to their own evil passions of pride and obstinacy; and thus unconsciously fulfilled God's sentence gone out against them.

MARY. But the "little ones" of Sihon's kingdom were not spared. I wonder why?

MAMA. In reading the history of the Canaanites, we must always remember, that these intolerably wicked nations were intended to be utterly swept from the earth which their crimes had long polluted; and that God's object in making use of the sword of the Israelites, instead of a plague or an earthquake, (in which you know all ages are, even among ourselves, alike involved,) was precisely to give *them*, by that painful office of extermination, such a deep-rooted and enduring horror of idolatry, as no milder spectacle of punishment would have sufficed to produce. Besides, experience sadly proved, that whenever they took upon themselves to exercise mistaken mercy towards any of their heathen neighbours, their own fall into the same sins was the infallible consequence.

What other king's overthrow does the third chapter we have glanced over commemorate?

MARY. Og, king of Bashan, "who only remained of the remnant of the giants," though the cowardly Israelites chose to think there were a great many. How odd that he should have had an iron bed-stead!

MAMA. Beds of brass or iron are not uncommon in hot countries, as a defence against in-

sects, and some of silver and gold, as well as ivory, are mentioned in ancient authors. But do you know how large (in our measure,) this bed actually was, which is said to have been nine cubits by four?

MARY. No, Mama.

MAMA. I will tell you its size, viz. fifteen feet long, by six or seven wide,—that I may, at the same time, give you the simple explanation, which, if a moment considered, would have saved a world of light profane scoffing on the supposed fabulous stature of the giant king of Bashan. People of rank in the east, (whose customs happily for the elucidation of Scripture remain unchanged even now,) both sit during the day and sleep at night on raised platforms called "beds" or "divans," occupying often a large part of the floor of the apartment, and bearing to the size of their dignified occupants no more proportion than perhaps the king of Bashan's did to his,—though it is certain his stature *was* extraordinary, else it would not have been mentioned here. Bear in mind, my dear child, if at any time you hear that Scripture has been cavilled at and doubted—that nine-tenths of the sneers and objections of its infidel opposers are as puerile in themselves and as easily confuted, as this of the bed of Rabbath.

Our day's reading concludes with the painful but instructive record of the fruitless pleading of even Moses, the servant of God, for the reversal of the sentence which the contumacy of the ancestors of those he was now addressing had brought down on his head. We learn from this, that while spiritual blessings follow fervent prayer so certainly as to make neglect in asking them a species of self-murder—remission of temporal evils by no means always ensues in the case of the most privileged suppliants. The unremoved "thorn in the flesh" of Paul, and the unfulfilled aspirations of Moses after Canaan, are recorded for this very purpose; and when in our own afflictions, relief is, in the decrees of Him who cannot err, denied,—let us reverently adopt the counsel of the Almighty himself, to the sorrowing petitioner here: "Let it suffice thee, speak no more to me of this matter;"—and resign ourselves in this, as in every part of our temporal condition, to the wisdom of One who knows, and knows only, "what is good for man all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow."

MORNING SEVENTEENTH.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters iv. and v.

MAMA. I know not, my dear Mary, whether in reading over the many admirable precepts by which gratitude to God, and obedience to His laws, are in these chapters enforced on the Israelites—you observed the injunction with which the first of them is ushered in, against "adding to or diminishing aught" of the "word" thus recapitulated by Moses; the literal fulfilment of which by the Jews forms so remarkable a contrast with that proneness to disobedience by which every page of their history is, more or less, unhappily marked.

The unadulterated preservation of the Hebrew Scriptures to our own day, amid rebellion, apostacy, and dispersion, is not among the least wonderful of the miracles which stamp the whole Jewish dispensation with the finger of God. And perhaps no means but those adopted in literal

compliance with the injunction above mentioned, could have secured against the bare possibility of alteration in later and more corrupt times, the moral precepts which still govern the conduct, and the precious promises and predictions which yet support and confirm the faith of the Christian world. Do you know what those singular means were?

MARY. No, Mama. How *could* they prevent words being put in or taken out, if their scribes and learned people chose?

MAMA. I will tell you. With labour and ingenuity we might style misdirected, had the result (as overruled by God), been less eminently beneficial,—they early counted not only the verses but the *words* of which these Scriptures were composed; formed tables containing the initial letters of each paragraph, the number of times each single word occurred in the text, and the precise order of it, taken from both the beginning and end of the book in which it occurred,—so that any interpolation, however slight, was liable to instant detection among a people, whose minute acquaintance with the letter of their Divine law was a perpetual rebuke on their frequent disregard of its spirit.

To this apparently puerile anxiety about words and syllables, (originating in the precept of

Moses,) do we probably owe the descent to our day of those prophecies of a suffering Saviour, and the nature of His spiritual kingdom, which the pride and self-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees would perhaps otherwise have swept from the records, as their glosses and traditions served to obliterate them from the minds of their countrymen.

But by what yet more important practical exhortation does Moses follow up his command respecting the *letter* of God's statutes and judgments, as rehearsed by him to the Israelites?

MARY. "Keep therefore and *do* them, for this is your wisdom, and your understanding in the sight of the nations."—"For what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

MAMA. Well might Moses, (in the name of the Divine Lawgiver), ask this triumphant question! And before concluding our review of his writings, I hope to furnish you with its ample solution, by pointing out to you a few only of those "righteous judgments" and enactments, distinguished alike for equity and mercy, which raise the law of Moses as high above mere human institutions, as its great Author is exalted above the deities of paganism.

What portion of their law is, in the mean time, recalled to their more special remembrance?

MARY. What they heard "standing before God in Horeb." That means the Ten Commandments, does it not?

MAMA. Yes, Mary, that moral law which Christ came not to "take away but fulfil;" and whose immutable obligation, (typified by its inscription with the "finger of God" on tables of stone), has survived the abolition of the whole Jewish temporary economy. How does Moses skilfully draw from the circumstances of its delivery a caution against idolatry?

MARY. "Take therefore good heed to yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day the Lord spake out of Horeb." Mama, how odd and needless it seemed to warn them against making an idol like a creeping thing or a fish! How could it occur to any one that people would think so meanly of God?

MAMA. Such degrading conceptions would indeed appear impossible, did we not know that they abounded in heathen idolatry. But, remember, Mary, that though we no longer worship our Creator under the visible shape of the meanest of His works, the propensity to lower Him to our own corrupt level is as strong and *fatal* as ever. It is easy to sneer, in the mistaken

pride of our hearts, at the reptile gods of Egypt, but methinks there is something more rational and elevating at least, in the error (also here guarded against) of those heathen nations who worshipped their Creator under the symbol of that sun "walking in brightness," whose beneficial activity ages have not sufficed to impair, nor revolutions to incline from its steadfast course,—than in that of the nominal Christian, who sets up for himself a God with more than the weaknesses of humanity,—One who can be offended with impunity, and "mocked" without resentment,—who (like the idols of old) "hath eyes and seeth not,"—"who saith and it is '*not*' done," and "threateneth and it shall '*not*' come to pass!"

But if even this primitive and most natural form of idolatry God has, we know, expressly reprobated, as estranging the soul from the great source of light and life, how can it be thought He will tolerate that more insidious modern "will-worship" which exalts the attribute of mercy at the expense of His other perfections, and still makes "God" (as was the pernicious tendency of too many heathen superstitions) the "Author of sin?"

By what strong expression does Moses sum up his exhortations against idolatry, and corrobo-

rate the view I have given of the existence of Jehovah's more awful attributes?

MARY. "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." But this was in Old Testament times, Mama. You have often told me he is to Christians a God of love.

MAMA. And, blessed be His name! my child, I told you so truly. But—as we all fail in remarking—he is unchangeable also; and the same "God who was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" ere Adam had sinned or Moses wrote—*must* retain His holy hatred against sin, till, in his awful character of a "consuming fire," He has swept it from creation with the "breath of his coming" to judgment. Nothing in this world is so calculated to deepen our sense of God's love, as high and adequate conceptions of His justice and holiness. Why then do Christians lose sight, in the "infinite compassion" of their heavenly Master, of the thunders of His omnipotence; or forget that He who is "mighty to save," must necessarily be also mighty to punish? If God had not loved sinners, Christ had not died. This the Christian believes, and rejoices. If God had not hated sin, Christ had not died. This he believes, and trembles!

But by what temporal threatenings does Moses

(speaking to a worldly aud carnal people) enforce his warnings against idolatry?

MARY. He says, when they made images in their own land, they should "utterly perish" from off it, and be scattered among the nations.

MAMA. All of which was literally fulfilled. But in what singular manner was their sin to be *there* made their punishment?

MARY. They were to serve Gods *there*, "the work of man's hands," which neither hear, nor eat, nor smell."

MAMA. That is, do reluctantly, at the bidding of foreign tyrants, what at home they had done of their own free will, and out of wanton disobedience. Do you remember any remarkable instance in the Bible, where such a command of a heathen prince was resisted by Jewish captives?

MARY. No, Mama.

MAMA. What! have you forgotten the three children thrown into the fiery furnace? How had they incurred that dreadful sentence?

MARY. Oh! How foolish of me to forget! For refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's great image which he had set up. But God preserved them. There was "not a hair of their heads singed."

MAMA. I am glad you remembered that; it

is an encouragement to God's servants in all ages. But what merciful promise is made in our chapter by Him "who delighteth in mercy"—to even sinners, among the outcasts of Israel?

MARY. That if they turned to God, and sought Him with their whole heart and soul, "He would not forsake them, nor forget His covenant which He sware unto their fathers."

MAMA. And observe how the pious gratitude of Moses here breaks out into a noble recapitulation of all the mighty works by which God had "taken a people for Himself out of the midst of another people;" and appeals to heaven and earth whether it was not a thing unprecedented since the world began. But what is the grand and salutary conclusion drawn by this admirable teacher from the whole?

MARY. "Know therefore this day, and consider in thine heart, that the Lord He is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath—there is none else."

MAMA. What peculiarly merciful provision of the law of Moses occurs in this chapter, which, as standing apart from the others I shall one day point out to you—we may consider now?

MARY. He "severed three cities for those to flee unto, who killed their neighbour unawares." This was very kind.

MAMA. Peculiarly so, in times when retaliation was permitted, and even the merciful law of Moses allowed an "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" and when the feelings of relations might be too much excited to admit of dispassionate inquiry into the circumstances of the case—while the confinement of the manslayer to his "city of refuge" secured society against his fatal recklessness, and kept him under the eye of those who would naturally be jealous of his future conduct.

On the fifth chapter, admirable as it is, our recent minute examination of the Ten Commandments, which it recites, leaves us little room for present commentary. May the Lord seal on your heart, my child, these never to be forgotten rules of life! And as a means far more persuasive than any I can use for doing so—repeat me that Lord's own expression of benevolent desire for the welfare, not of Israel only, but of that "seed" whom "He hath chosen for Himself, out of all people, and nations, and languages." What says the twenty-ninth verse?

MARY. "Oh! that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!"

MAMA. Does not your heart glow, my child,

as you read these touching words of Omnipotence —of "Him who wills not that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life?" To add to them would be unnecessary—almost impious. Let them sink deep into your heart, and persuade you, with an eloquence far above all human teaching, to beware how you "grieve" that "Holy Spirit," who—one with the Father in His nature and attributes—is still more identified with Him in love for the souls, and care for the immortal destinies of men!

MORNING EIGHTEENTH.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters vi. vii. and viii.

MAMA. The leading object of Moses in the chapters we have just read, being to dissuade his countrymen from idolatry, and enforce by every imaginable motive of love, admiration and gratitude, the reverence and worship of Jehovah—he very naturally prefaces his exhortations by a solemn declaration of that unity and majesty of God, the recognition of which he might well suppose not only the best, but an infallible antidote against all the degradations and abominations of surrounding heathenism. That it proved otherwise is surely not attributable to any want of precision or sublimity in the declaration itself, or of cogency in the injunction to love that "Lord" exclusively, with which it was followed up. Repeat them, my dear, to engrave on your own memory a different, and in our days more essential truth, viz. that the Jehovah here described, and truly, as "One Lord," is the same, who "was in Christ reconciling the world unto

Himself;" and see if, from this consideration, the exhortation of Moses to "love Him with all the heart and soul and strength," does not derive to the ear of a Christian tenfold force and obligation. It was the "Lord" who created and preserved them whom the Israelites were called on thus to love. It is the "Lord" who made, redeemed and sanctified us, at whose "name every knee should bow," and every heart glow throughout the Christian world.

By what means were this knowledge and love of God in the heart to be perpetuated among the Israelites?

MARY. By "teaching them diligently to their children, and talking of them sitting in the house, and walking by the way; lying down and rising up;" just as you have done to me, Mama, ever since I can remember.

MAMA. Yes, my child, and with God's own authority for it, and blessing on my endeavours —I humbly hope not altogether in vain. We call that mother unnatural, who neglects to supply the temporal wants of her offspring; the Word of God, you see, leaves her still more inexcusable, who gives them not in "due season" that spiritual nurture which He himself has graciously condescended to provide. I think I have told *you how* the ignorant Jews degraded by a literal

fulfilment the divine injunction here given. How was it?

MARY. Oh! by actually writing the words of God on bits of parchment, and tying them on their hands and foreheads, as if that could make them better. You told me the wicked Pharisees wore them so, and I am sure it did them no good. Did they write them on their houses and gate-posts too?

MAMA. Yes—not openly, to avoid possible profanation—but enclosed in little cases, and placed near the knockers of their doors, that they might often touch and kiss them. How little connexion mere external symbols have with the essentials of heart-religion, their history may suffice to teach us; though, as remembrancers, (which we all need so much), they might not be altogether without use. But from what future state of their affairs does the wise lawgiver of Israel anticipate most danger to religion among his countrymen?

MARY. He was afraid that when God had given them every thing, they should forget Him; surely this was not likely.

MAMA. Not only likely, but true, Mary; nor, alas! is the hardening and corrupting influence of prosperity on the human character confined to the history of Israel. We ourselves,

Mary, are the ungrateful children of many mercies—the heedless partakers of a course of national benefits as unparalleled as, I fear, our punishment for their abuse may yet become! From this deplorable forgetfulness Moses mentions but two preservatives,—the fear and service of God; and how much both are declining among ourselves, the most thoughtless cannot but perceive—and tremble.

What motive of interest, as well as duty, is mentioned here, common to us with the children of Israel?

MARY. It says, God "commanded us to fear the Lord *for our good* always."

MAMA. And truly will it be "for our good" if we obey the beneficent command of Him who, in all his requirements, has in view for us, not merely those temporal advantages which were held out as the reward of Jewish obedience, but the eternal "good" of our immortal souls.

By what rigid precautions did Moses, in the following chapter, seek to ward off from the Israelites all seductions to idolatry?

MARY. He bade them utterly destroy the nations God should cast out before them, and make no covenants or marriages with them.

MAMA. And why was this latter article *particularly* insisted on?

MARY. "Because they will turn away thy son from following me."

MAMA. It would be well if such salutary caution extended, in our own days, to the prevention of rash connexions; for what says an Apostle? "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers;" and the number of those who are practically such is, alas! still alarmingly great.

But, lest the Israelites should be elated by the success given them by a higher Power, and the epithet of "holy people" applied to them by Moses, how does he humblingly recal their original insignificance?

MARY. "Ye were the fewest of all people;" and so they were once, Mama. You know, only "seventy souls" went with Jacob into Egypt.

MAMA. Well remembered; but even this was a great increase,—for when God chose Abraham and his seed for ever, to be "as the sand on the sea shore for multitude," he had not even a child to be the heir of promise; so little does God depend on human means or probabilities for success in His designs.

We will not at present notice the temporal blessings and curses with which obedience is enforced and rebellion threatened in this chapter, because in a future one we shall find them yet

more distinctly and fearfully contrasted; but couple with God's denunciations of vengeance on the idolatrous nations before enumerated, his gracious reason for exterminating them by degrees, and not immediately. What was it, Mary?

MARY. Lest the beasts of the field should increase upon the Israelites.

MAMA. Yes; and completely is the necessity of the merciful precaution corroborated by later travellers. One of them says, the country once so fertile, but now once more depopulated, "about Cana in Galilee, swarms with tigers, leopards, and jackals, whose howlings would strike the boldest traveller (not inured to them) with the deepest sense of horror." How remarkably this state of things confirms the prophecies regarding the desolation of Judea, we need not now stay to remark. But remember, it was only by falling at length into the sins of the Canaanites, that their conquerors became sharers in their punishment.

By what salutary considerations does Moses in the 8th chapter, propose to guard his countrymen against so great an evil?

MARY. He bade them remember that God "led them forty years in the wilderness, to humble them and prove them, and fed them with manna which their fathers knew not."

MAMA. And what might they have learned from this miraculous support?

MARY. That "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

MAMA. Do you remember by whom these remarkable words were quoted and applied?

MARY. Yes, Mama; by our Lord in the desert, when Satan wanted him to turn the stones into bread. I never knew till now in what part of the Bible the words were "written."

MAMA. And now that you do know, it will help you to see the force of our Lord's inference, that He who had sustained in the same wilderness a whole nation forty years without natural bread, could as easily, in its absence, support the strength of a single believing servant.

MARY. Did the clothes of the Israelites really never grow old all that time; or how were the children born among them provided?

MAMA. The power of God supernaturally to clothe as well as feed his people during their wanderings, none but an infidel can question; and thus has the text sometimes been literally interpreted. But as (according to our Lord's application,) even bread itself could derive its nutritious quality only from the blessing of God—so the raiment supplied, by whatever means, to a

great nation in the desert, must have been due to the same Almighty providence.

But, Mary, let us observe the grand object both of God's merciful and afflictive dealings with the Israelites, viz. their fatherly chastisement and training for his future service. Never let us forget that Canaan, with all its riches and fertility, was a type of that "better" land of which alone it can be said with perfect truth, that in it the Christian "shall not lack anything;" and let us look on every event of our pilgrimage towards it, as a part of the discipline necessary to fit us for our "Father's house."

Did all the forty years' painful experience of the Israelites prove a more than sufficient preparation for the perilous prosperity of their earthly rest?

MARY. No, Mama; in spite of it all, they "forgot God."

MAMA. While we bless His name that we cannot forget Him in our heavenly home, let us beware lest we "fall short of it through unbelief," or contempt of the warnings so abundantly bestowed upon us in His word.

What precept does Moses give on occasion of our partaking of God's bounty?

MARY. "When thou hast eaten and art full, *then thou* shalt bless the Lord thy God."

MAMA. On which text the laudable custom of giving thanks at meals is thought (among the Jews at least) to have been founded. It is one, at all events, which no Christian will feel disposed to omit. But what may be the state of the *hearts* of those, who even in words acknowledge the "Giver of all good?"

MARY. They may be "lifted up," Mama. Moses was afraid the Israelites would think that "their power and might had gotten them all the wealth of Canaan."

MAMA. And what was predicted, and actually proved to be, the effect of such guilty arrogance and ingratitude?

MARY. They "should surely perish, like the nations God had destroyed before their face;" and so it happened, Mama, just as Moses warned them.

MAMA. Let it warn us, my child. If "God spared not" his own chosen people for the national sins of pride and infidelity, what ground have Christians who fall into them, to hope for impunity, or exemption from the sweeping and awful sentence, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God?"

MORNING NINETEENTH.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters ix. x. and xi.

MAMA. I think we may gather, my dear Mary, from the exhortation of Moses in these impressive chapters, that the existing generation of Israel, whose progenitors had forfeited Canaan by distrust and unbelief,—had more need to be guarded against the opposite sins of pride and presumption; since the same enlightened monitor who on former occasions rebuked their exaggerated fears of the "children of Anak," now sets before them, without disguise, the might and power of the cities, "great and fenced up to heaven," which they were about immediately to attack. Can you account for this change in the style of their paternal lawgiver, or in the temper of his hearers?

MARY. Mama, I dare say it was because they had already killed Sihon and Og, and all their *people, that* they had grown proud, and needed

to be humbled. Perhaps they forgot it was God who fought for them.

MAMA. In all probability they did, else Moses had not found it necessary to bid them "understand that the Lord their God was He who went before them."

But granting they had not lost sight of this great truth, from what other little less dangerous error does Moses strive to guard them?

MARY. From speaking in their heart as if God had brought them in for their own righteousness. Mama, they could not well think that, when they had been kept out forty years just for their wickedness!

MAMA. Not the existing generation, you will remember; who on this very favourable change in God's dispensations towards themselves, perhaps founded arrogant ideas of their own superior merit and pretensions. These it was undoubtedly necessary to correct, both for their own discipline and humiliation, and for our edification who read their history; one of the great stumbling blocks in which, to the thoughtless infidel, has ever been the signal unworthiness of the Jews to be objects of God's distinguishing regard. Therefore it is that throughout the whole of these chapters, he so pointedly recapitulates the endless and unpardonable rebellions

of their ancestors; which I scarcely think he would have dwelt on in a parting and evidently affectionate address, had not overweening pride and self-confidence in their descendants, made it expedient to assure them—on the word of one who knew and yet loved them,—that they, like their fathers, were a stiff-necked people. What reasons, then, utterly independent of personal merit in the instruments themselves, does Moses say moved God to destroy, by their means, the Canaanite nations?

MARY. First, the wickedness of those shocking people, Mama, and then that He might "perform His word to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." But do you know, I think it was harsh in Moses to reproach the people about the golden calf, and the murmuring at Massah, and the not believing the spies, when some of them were hardly born at the time it happened.

MAMA. You are unconsciously confirming my conjecture, that Moses perceived but too clearly, in the generation which had grown up before him, the leaven of the same sin which lost their parents' Canaan; with a probable addition of self-righteousness in their supposed exemption from them. Alas! Mary, human nature is ever the same under all circumstances; and however *the absence* of temptation or opportunity may for

a time hide its sinfulness from ourselves or others, a change "from above" in its motives and propensities, can alone make any of us "better than our fathers!" But there is one remarkable circumstance connected with the very harshness of rebuke you complain of, viz. the strong confirmation it affords to the Divine commission and supernatural authority of Moses. Would an old man, just sinking into the grave, with nothing but human good will and popularity to support him, have disobliged his countrymen by so humbling a picture of their national character?

MARY. No, I scarcely think he would. But though he scolds them so much, you know he always prayed for them; that would make up for it.

MAMA. Yes, Mary, that he loved them in spite of their faults he shewed in a thousand instances. But so far is he from making any merit with them of these frequent intercessions, (as an ordinary man would have done,) that he uniformly represents them as dictated far more by regard for the glory of Jehovah than partiality to his countrymen. Not once does this intrepid servant of God attempt even to palliate their unworthiness. It is for the sake of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and still more for the ho-

nour of the Lord, that he pleads for their pardon and continued preservation.

But what a touching air of sincerity does this very uncompromising integrity lend to the frequent bursts of affection and patriotism, scattered through this most delightful of the books of Moses! Repeat me the beautiful and truly Christian summary of duty and religion with which (at the twelfth verse of our second chapter,) the recapitulation of God's oft-renewed long-suffering is fitly followed up.

MARY. "And, now, O Israel! what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?"

MAMA. And, Oh! my Christian child! if such things were "required," and justly, of the wandering Israelite, as a return for the life, and food and raiment,—the guidance by day and protection by night, and other temporal blessings which, in these days of advanced civilization, you share with him in far larger measure,—how doubly are they incumbent on you, as a subject of Christ's kingdom of grace here, and an heir of his kingdom of glory hereafter. If the motives drawn by Moses, alternately from the greatness

and goodness of the God of the Jews, seem, as they do to every unprejudiced reader, abundant and irresistible,—why are the thousand-fold claims of the God of the Christian so coldly admitted and so inadequately fulfilled? Surely He who was the "praise and the God" of the Hebrews in the desert, should be our "song and our joy in the house of our pilgrimage" here, as He will be of all the redeemed in the Canaan above!

On the last of this day's chapters we shall have the less occasion to enlarge at present, as the wholesome recapitulation with which it opens, of the more awful judgments on Egypt, however necessary for the many who had not been their eye-witnesses, has been before dwelt on, and, we may hope, not without advantage by ourselves. But there is a peculiarity in the contrast Moses draws between the country of their bondage and Canaan, which you must have observed, and which I should like to hear if you understand.

MARY. I know why Moses mentions that Canaan was a "land that drank water of the rain from heaven," because Egypt, you told me long ago, had no rains, and depended entirely on the Nile. But why does he say, that when they lived in that country, they "watered it with their foot?"

MAMA. Have you ever thought, since you were aware it had only the Nile to depend on, how it was watered at all? Could the river run through every man's field and "garden of herbs?"

MARY. No; I suppose they must have carried the water.

MAMA. If you thought so—but I suspect you did not think at all—you would indeed at once have found sufficient employment (without making bricks) for all the countless multitude of Israelitish bondmen. But the thing would even then have been impossible. How do you suppose it was managed; and how came the land of Egypt, "that hath no rain," to be the granary of the civilized world?

MARY. I am sure I don't know.

MAMA. I will tell you. The whole surface of the long narrow valley through which the Nile runs, and which forms the cultivable part of Egypt, was ingeniously filled with canals or ditches, from whence again multitudes of smaller rills intersected every spot of ground within them. Close to the river large reservoirs (or tanks, as they are still called in the east) were dug, with which these canals communicated; and whenever, from the rains in the mountains of Upper Egypt, *the yearly* rise of the Nile, on which the whole

osperity and vegetation of the country de-
nded, took place, the water filled these reser-
irs; and for a long time afterwards, during the
ole season required for the growth of the
ps, each husbandman drew from them, through
several canals, the moisture requisite for his
ched field or garden.

MARY. I understand this, Mama; but how
he "water them with his foot?"

MAMA. There are two explanations given
his remarkable expression. The first, that
Egyptian gardener is still in the daily prac-
of using his foot to close up with earth one
e little rills leading to his beds, and thus
cting the water into another. The second,
in ancient Egypt a machine or wheel with
something resembling our tread-mill, was
se for raising up water from the river—a
ing of one of which, as now used in China,
exactly corresponds with a description left us of
the old Egyptian one.

This has been a long digression; but the con-
trast between all this labour and fatigue, and
the spontaneous fertility of Canaan, must have
been striking to those of the Israelites who re-
membered it; and will not have been lost on
ourselves, if we pursue the parallel between
their scanty supplies of spiritual refreshment,

and our copious access to the very "wells of salvation."

The contrasted blessings and curses with which our reading concluded, we shall reserve for consideration in a future chapter, of which they form the entire and memorable subject. But while *there* they are enlarged on with a special minuteness, which, by its wonderful subsequent fulfilment, may seem to limit them to the Jews,—here, at least, all who "run may read" the simple but awful truth, interesting alike to all the subjects of God's government,—"Behold I set before you this day a blessing and a curse. A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God; and a curse, if ye will not obey them, and turn aside out of the way which I command you this day."

MORNING TWENTIETH.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters xii. xvi. and xxvi.

MAMA. Although it was no part of our plan at present, my dear Mary, to dwell minutely or at length on the ceremonial observances peculiar to the Jews, yet I have thought far too important to be omitted, the chapters forming this day's reading; because in them you have recorded the leading and more spiritual features of the Mosaic ritual, accompanied with God's own reasons for their institution, and those moral inducements to their observance, of which the Christian no less than the Hebrew (indeed with infinitely greater clearness) must for ever acknowledge the propriety. Should it ever be your fate to hear the rationality—nay, even when rightly apprehended—the spirituality of the Mosaic dispensation called in question—recollect the authoritative, the intelligible and persuasive manner in which the Almighty, in these chapters, asserts his claim to the reverence, gratitude, and obe-

dience of his chosen people, and ask yourself, (those best acquainted with history, the triumph ant question of Moses, "What nation is there that hath God so nigh to them as the Lord our God is in all things we call on him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all these which set before you this day?"

What do we find the first and indispensable preliminary to the appointment of regular worship in the promised land?

MARY. Utterly destroying all the places where the wicked Canaanites had served their gods. Mama, you told me why the heathen chose groves to hide their cruel worship in; but what made them so fond of temples upon hills?

MAMA. A heathen author has supplied us with the answer. He says, "They were then nearer the gods, and more easily obtained a hearing."

MARY. Oh! Mama, what a foolish notion! But as Christ prayed in a grove, and the temple of Jerusalem was set on a hill, I suppose there was nothing in itself wrong in either.

MAMA. Certainly not. All parts of God's universe are alike consecrated to the service of their Creator; and the silent wood and lofty mountain have a fitness of their own (far removed

from the "vain imaginations" of the heathen) for the worship of the heart. But what precaution did "He who knew what was in man" take against the lingering superstition of "groves" and "high places" among the Jews?

MARY. They were all to bring their burnt-offerings to the place God should "choose, to put his name there, and eat and rejoice before Him." Was it not a long way for some of them to drive their cattle and sheep to Jerusalem? How did they manage?

MAMA. Not only were those at a great distance allowed to turn into money the actual first-lings of their flocks, and purchase others at Jerusalem, but (the blood alone being as a type of the atonement, expressly reserved by God) every Israelite might kill and eat in his own gates, all parts of his herds and flocks; except such free-will offerings as the prevention of Idolatry absolutely required to be kept sacred to the one true God, and sacrificed on His sole altar. Do you remember what occurred the moment this wise enactment was dispensed with by Jeroboam?

MARY. Oh! yes; ten tribes left God for his golden calves; and as the true priests would not leave Jerusalem, he made others, and even offered sacrifice himself.

MAMA. And what moral consequences inevitably ensued?

MARY. He and his people grew wickeder and wickeder; and forgot God more than the other tribes who still went to the place of His appointment.

MAMA. And such would be the infallible consequence, even in our times, of every man worshipping God "as it seemed right in his own eyes," instead of a holy conformity to the appointed means of grace. But instead of its being (as some love to represent it) a burdensome imposition for the Jew to bring thrice a-year before God the living fruits of the abundance with which He had been pleased to crown his labours, it seems to me a most cheerful and benevolent institution. How likely to cement private friendship and national union, was the provision thus graciously made, for a feast of love and rejoicing, in the immediate presence of Him, whose bounty spread the table, and whose blessing hallowed the repast! Well had it been for the Jews had the solemn injunction, "Take heed that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place thou seest," been strictly observed! The high hills and green trees of Israel could never have been again polluted by idolatry, nor would years of captivity

and suffering have been required, to vindicate the insulted majesty of Jehovah.

The second of our chapters (the 16th) will inform us more minutely of the grounds and nature of the three great festivals, on which every male of the Hebrews (not disabled by infirmity) was required to appear and rejoice before God. Which stood first in order of these joyful solemnities?

MARY. The Passover, Mama. I suppose it came first, because bringing them out of Egypt was the first great thing God did for the Jews.

MAMA. Well observed; and, besides, like the deliverance it commemorated, it occurred in spring. You already know from what merciful preservation of the first-born of Israel, its name of "Passover" was derived; but why is it also called the "the feast of unleavened bread?"

MARY. Because of the haste the people were in when they left Egypt, which would not allow them time for leavening their dough. I am sure the Israelites must have kept this feast with all their hearts, when they thought of their hardships in Egypt and happiness in Canaan!

MAMA. How then should "Christ *our* Passover," be commemorated by every grateful Christian heart, when the degradation of man's fallen condition is viewed in contrast with his purchased

hopes, as an heir of glory and immortality! By choosing the same month and day, nay, the same hour, even the "going down of the sun" for his expiatory sacrifice, the "Lamb of God" has for ever appropriated and hallowed to himself this one of the three ancient festivals; as we shall find to have been the case with the second, by another person of the blessed Trinity.

How was the next in order of the "solemn assemblies" denominated and observed?

MARY. It was called the "feast of weeks," and was to be kept with "a tribute of a free-will offering," according as God hath blessed them, and they were to rejoice again before Him.

MAMA. Was it only the rich and prosperous, with their households, who were to obey this gracious command?

MARY. No, Mama; "the stranger and the fatherless, and the widow." How good of God, to think of and provide for them!

MAMA. And what a lesson to the wealthy among ourselves, to make our abundance, and its attendant blessings, reach those, who, instead of being forgotten (as some suppose) in the fatherly distributions of our common Parent, are but consigned as a sacred trust to us his stewards; of whom He will rigidly require not only their bare *support*, but, as far as in us lies, attention to their

comfort, and interest in their happiness! The Israelite might not rejoice alone, "because he had been a bondman in Egypt." Dares the Christian selfishly enjoy, while his brother, one equally with himself, the "ransomed of the Lord," goes "mourning all the day long," for want of that pittance of temporal goods, which would enrich the one, without impoverishing the other?

Had this "feast of weeks," so called because seven of these were to elapse before it from the commencement of harvest, any other name?

MARY. I don't know; there is none here.

MAMA. On what occasion do we read of the Holy Spirit descending on the apostles in "cloven tongues of fire?"

MARY. Oh! the day of Pentecost. Why was it so called?

MAMA. Because it occurred "fifty days," or seven weeks after the Passover. The last of these days, and first of the feast, was especially holy; and on it (the apostles being as devout Jews, "all of one accord in one place,") did the third person of the Godhead manifest his visible presence in the striking form above mentioned.

What were the peculiarities of the next solemn festival?

MARY. It was called the "feast of Tabernacles." Why so, Mama?

MAMA. Because the people, in commemoration of their sojourn in tents in the wilderness, lived for the eight days it lasted in booths, or "tabernacles," made of boughs of trees. It is the only one of the three festivals, which, now that their "daily sacrifice is taken away" and their temple destroyed, modern Jews have the means of celebrating; and I am told they still do so, even in towns, with great regularity; building their leafy arbours, not as in happier days in Judea, on the flat roofs of their oriental dwellings, but in the upper chambers of many a smoky dingy house in London and other cities; where the nearest neighbour knows as little of the interior of a Jewish family, and its traditional rites, as we do of the rigidly concealed customs of Japan.

MARY. How curious! that "tabernacles" should actually be built in England at this day! But, Mama, I was thinking, since the "Passover" is still kept in honour of Christ, and the day of Pentecost remembered, because of the Holy Ghost coming down, we ought to build a tabernacle still (in our hearts at least) to God, to thank Him for the corn and wine He gives us, as well as He did the Jews.

MAMA. I am glad this grateful, and not inappropriate remark occurred to you, my dear

child, and I hope you will improve it by dedicating, not seven days only, but every seventh day in the year, to pious gratitude to Him from whom all blessings flow. Observe too, on these occasions, the injunction "not to appear before the Lord empty," but give towards the support of your poorer brethren, "according to the blessing of thy God which He hath given thee."

MARY. Mama, I have just observed, on reading over the last verses, that only *men* were to go up to Jerusalem three times a-year. Did women not worship God in those days?

MAMA. Assuredly they did, and the rejoicing of the widows mentioned here, as well as the circumstance of our Lord's mother and pious Hannah accompanying their husbands to keep the Passover, shows that their attendance, though not enforced, was by no means prohibited. But granting it had, and admitting that they were often, by the cares of a family, necessarily detained at home, you forget that the public sacrifices formed only part of the gracious provision of God for His worship and service. This forgetfulness is too common; and while we hear much of the burnt-offerings and oblations of the Jewish temple, we seldom think of the weekly devotions of the synagogues, established in every village and provided for by the careful dispersion

throughout the land of those "Levites," one of whom is supposed, in this very chapter, to be residing within every rich man's gates, and whom, in our former one, he is charged on his peril "not to forsake while he lives on the earth." The synagogue worship resembled our own, in consisting partly of prayer, preaching, and praise. Do you remember the part our Lord took in it when entering on His ministry?

MARY. Yes, Mama; he read a passage from Isaiah about himself, and all the people were "astonished." *I* was astonished too, I remember, because he was neither a priest nor a Levite. How came he, a young man, to get the book given him when he came in?

MAMA. I myself did not know Mary, till very lately, that in so doing our blessed Lord was fulfilling a national custom, observed among his countrymen to this day. The first act of public life of every young Jew is to perform for once the office of public reader in his Synagogue; and among rich persons the day is celebrated as one of great solemnity and rejoicing. Little were the congregation at Nazareth aware of the power and majesty of the obscure individual, who, without one advantage of rank or education, nevertheless "spake as never man spake," as "one *having* authority, and not as the scribes!"

Our knowledge of the moral and spiritual part of the Jewish ritual would have been imperfect, had we omitted the third of our present chapters, which, though occurring at some distance, I have thought proper to include in this day's reading. It records, in very striking terms, a most interesting rite; peculiar to the Jews indeed, but worthy of the spiritual imitation of Christians, in its humble and affecting recognition of that goodness which extendeth to all the children of our common Father, alike dependant on his undeserved bounty. What was its external symbol?

MARY. When the people were come into the land God gave them, and had reaped its fruits, they were to put the first of them all into a basket, and take it to the place God should choose, and give it to the priest that should be in those days, to set it down before the altar of the Lord.

MAMA. A most significant homage in itself, to the Power and truth and goodness which had brought them through so many obstacles to the fruition of the land of promise! But mark the humility with which the great lawgiver of the Jews teaches them to designate one of their most highly vaunted ancestors. Do you know who is meant by the "Syrian ready to perish," whom

alone they are permitted to call Father, "before the Lord?"

MARY. I suppose it means Jacob, who was "ready to perish" twice—when he ran away from home, and in the famine afterwards. But why is he called a Syrian?

MAMA. It is thought because Laban (whose country he adopted and whose family he married into) was one, or else because Syria anciently included Mesopotamia.—But be this as it may, the term must have sounded harsh and opprobrious in the ears, and still more on the lips of the haughty Jew; who was thus commanded to lay his national pride, as well as the arrogance of wealth, in deep humility at the feet of Jehovah. How did his prescribed address terminate?

MARY. "And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me."

MAMA. Such was to be the profession of every grateful Israelite, and such the appropriation of his first fruits to their Donor. What was to be his conduct with regard to tithes?

MARY. He was to "give them according to God's commandment, to the Levite, the strange that was within his gates, the fatherless and the widow, that they might eat and be filled."

MAMA. Observe from this, how ancient and venerable is the provision, (in these days of innovation so rashly disputed), for the pastors of God's flock, and the poor among his people. The tithes being thus divinely allotted, what abuse or profanation of them did the devout Israelite solemnly disclaim?

MARY. "Eating them in his mourning," or giving them to unclean uses or to the dead. I don't quite know what all this means.

MAMA. The Egyptians offered *their* first fruits to Isis, not with rejoicings, like the grateful Jew, but with "doleful lamentations." They spent much of them in impure revellings, and sacrificed largely to dead kings and heroes; all which superstitions being here abjured and renounced, the pious Israelite could with confidence put up his concluding petition; "Look down from thy holy habitation from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers."

Such, my dear Mary, were the leading festivals (apart from the deeper and more mysterious rites typical of Christ's atonement, which will some time hence merit your most serious consideration) of the Jewish dispensation. Judge for yourself, for it is a point on which the youngest may feel and decide, whether they were not

admirably calculated to regulate the affections, interest the heart, and banish selfishness; and by cultivating true piety, viz. love to God and man, prepare the way for that still purer dispensation, which—springing from the same Divine Author—it can never either be honourable to Him, or safe for ourselves, to disjoin (as too many do) from its admirable Mosaic forerunner.

MORNING TWENTY-FIRST.

LESSON,—Deuteronomy, Chapters xv. and xxii. to verse 8; xxiv. from verse 14.

MAMA. The natural order of our reading, my dear Mary, has brought us to the part of the dying exhortation of Moses, more especially containing those kind and merciful provisions in the law of Jehovah, to which I have often referred, as sufficing to establish its Divine origin, and raise it immeasurably above every system of legislation devised by human wisdom and benevolence. To leave you ignorant of these, would be to deprive you of one of the most delightful branches of Scriptural knowledge; and of one of the most powerful arguments in favour of the genuineness and inspiration of those Old Testament writings in which they occur. But as a continued perusal of the chapters containing them would involve a departure from our plan of omitting for the present all notice of the pecu-

liar institutions of the Jews,—apart from that morality which is older than the Law, and will survive the Gospel—we must content ourselves with gleaning them as we go along, and corroborating them, as our memories serve, by the many similar injunctions with which our past reading, or the omitted portions of the previous books of Moses, also abound.

Let us begin with the beautiful provision against covetousness and hardness of heart contained in the first of our chapters. What was the meaning of the "year of release?"

MARY. Every seventh year, creditors were to excuse their debtors from paying what they owed, because it was "the Lord's release." Mama, this would rather make them hard-hearted and afraid to lend, for fear of never getting it back.

MAMA. And it is precisely the gracious antidote to such natural perversity of feeling, which the Lord of the poor and needy condescends here to provide, when he says, "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, the year of release is at hand, and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee."

"Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart

shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him;" and why, Mary?

MARY. "Because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." This was a selfish reason, Mama; surely loving our neighbour was a better.

MAMA. You forget the temporal rewards on which the whole dealings of God with the Jews are, for wise reasons, founded. But I am glad you do not lose sight of the higher and purer motives in which Christian charity has its source. How long was the commanded liberality of the pious Israelite to endure?

MARY. Till there were "no poor in the land;" and as God says afterwards that they should "never cease out of the land"—of course charity was to last for ever too.

MAMA. Have we any New Testament corroboration of the inequality of human conditions, as a permanent dispensation of Providence? What said our Lord when pretended regard for humanity brought censure on the pious work of Mary?

MARY. "The poor ye have always with you."

MAMA. And so it will be to the end of time; else charity, the fairest and most godlike of the Christian virtues, would lose much of its appro-

priate exercise. Let us consider, while speaking of loans, other merciful precepts on the same subject, which might shame the conduct of Christians, viz:—the positive prohibition to take usury, (meaning thereby, undue advantage of a brother's necessities,)—and the injunction not merely to restore, before the going down of the sun, the pledged garment of him whom the want of it might expose to sleep uncovered—but with considerate delicacy to forbear intruding on the possible poverty of his dwelling, by going in to fetch the pledge, and remaining at the door till it should be brought out. Surely "He who knew what was in man," and "had compassion on our infirmities," could alone have framed precepts at once so discriminating and benign!

Was it property alone, which at the end of seven years was to be released?

MARY. No, Mama; slaves every seventh year were to go free. How came God to allow the Jews to have slaves at all? is it not wicked?

MAMA. Domestic slavery, my dear, prevailed universally at this time, and long after, in the world. And its regulation by Divine authority among the Jews, and the apostolic injunctions to submission under it, among the early Christians, are undoubted proofs of the Almighty's *toleration* of what was perhaps, in the then state

of society, an inevitable evil. But as this state of servitude was among heathen nations (even the most polished ones) frightfully abused, to the neglect, degradation, and even murder of millions of fellow human beings—nothing could better testify the goodness of God than the Mosaic obligations to conduct diametrically opposed (in this as in many other cases,) to heathen practice. Even while the bond continued, the master was forbid to oppress or maltreat his bondman. If his life suffered from ill usage, that of his owner was forfeited. If an eye or tooth was injured, freedom was the compensation. And stripes were to be limited to forty, not merely from regard to humanity, but "lest thy brother should seem vile unto thee, if beaten with many stripes!" How might the brutally treated slaves of the enlightened Romans have envied the despised Jewish bondman!

But was mere freedom from captivity all that was secured to the Hebrew slave by God, "who is no respecter of persons?"

MARY. No; his master was to furnish him liberally with all that he required, out of what God had blessed him with.

MAMA. And for what affecting reason?

MARY. "Thou shalt remember that thou

wert a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee."

MAMA. Let us hope that this consideration, in its higher Christian sense, still influences those, who in our day endeavour so strenuously to ameliorate the condition, and in due time to burst the bonds of those few remaining slaves, whom the mild light of Christianity has as yet failed to let "go free." But never let us forget the difference which that light, even imperfectly followed, has put between the lot of those heathen "servants," (or *slaves* as the original means) whom St. Paul nevertheless exhorts to obedience—and the poor negro of our own day. The greatest men among the Greeks and Romans, even Cato, whom we are accustomed to hear called "godlike," starved their slaves to death when old and past their labour. Whole households were tortured on the slightest suspicion, and massacred in wantonness on the death of their owners; they were kept, when off work, chained in dens like wild beasts; in short, were of less account than the "brutes that perish"—while the influence of our blessed religion has obliged even those who slight its direct authority, to provide amply for the physical wants of their slaves—to spare them in sickness and maintain them in old *age,* allow them time for recreation, and even, of

late, admit them to the participation of their own immortal privileges. Remember this is the work, not of human advancement, (as many will tell you,) but of Christian principles; and for these, observe how admirably the precepts we are considering must have paved the way. As a proof of the degree in which they were obeyed, you will observe slaves are sometimes here supposed to be too much attached to accept emancipation; and I am happy to say similar instances not unfrequently attest the kindness of masters at the present day.

There is a precept in the 24th chapter regarding the "hired servant" or labourer, which our civilized times would do well to adopt and cultivate. What says the 14th verse on this head?

MARY. "Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers. At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it. Lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin upon thee."

MAMA. And a "sin" it truly is, upon the heads of many selfish and unprincipled persons, young as well as old, among ourselves, to withhold—either from improvidence or mere thoughtlessness—that payment of labour which is not

only the just due, but perhaps the "all" of the industrious families, condemned by their remissness to undeserved, and, we may be assured, not unrequited suffering. Their "cry," it is to be feared, daily ascends from every corner of this Christian land, to Him who will sooner or later avenge them. Let not extravagance, or culpable indifference of our's, Mary, ever go to swell the fearful sum of misery caused by neglect of the precept you have read!

What further benevolent provision for the poor, (besides direct charity,) do you find in this 24th chapter?

MARY. "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in the field, and hast forgot a sheaf, thou shalt not go again to fetch it. It shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and the widow." And the same, Mama, with gleanings of olives and grapes. How kind of God to think of them! and how considerate all this must have made the Jews!

MAMA. How considerate ought it to make *us*, Mary, for whom also these things were written; and who are aware of the calamities whicl neglect of them, (as well as of the higher dutie of the first table) brought upon the nation of th Jews. If we compare the conduct to whi *blessings* and promises are here annexed, wi

the shocking account given by God, through the mouth of his prophets, of the injustice, cruelty, and oppression of the Jews in after-times,—the forfeiture, complete and deserved, of the promises and blessings, can never surprise, though it may awe and warn us. But remember it was when they "forgot God," and were "wholly given to idolatry," that this perversion of national character took place; and let us, as the source of all genuine humanity, try and "keep our hearts" right with Him, who hath bid us love Him first, and "our neighbour as ourselves."

In what minute instances is the "second great commandment" of the law enforced in the 22d chapter?

MARY. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt in any case bring them home to thy brother;" and they were to keep them till the owner appeared, even if they did not know him, and if they fell down, to help them up again. This was kind to him, as well as to the poor animals; and only think of God condescending to save the poor mother when birds' nests were taken. But I wonder He did not forbid *that* altogether?

MAMA. My dear, the benevolence which pervadès the whole chapter may convince you

that it is not mere wanton robbery which is here even indirectly sanctioned. The birds alluded to were doubtless those designed for food, particularly pigeons, with which Judea swarmed; and in the permitted deprivation of which, for our use, we exactly (though unconsciously) follow the prescribed limitation. Similar injunctions, (without being too literally understood,) generally inculcate such a sparing and regulated use of God's creatures, as consists with His intention, and the advantage of man.

Our next reading will be of a less pleasing and more awful character, consisting of instances (passed over for connexion's sake) of exceptions to the gentle merciful tenor of the precepts we have so complacently dwelt on. And both together will appropriately usher in those contrasted blessings and curses with which the aged lawgiver concludes his address to the people he had so long watched over.

The beautiful, though comparatively trifling, precepts we have gleaned to-day might suffice (were mightier testimonies wanting) to prove that the "God" who dictated them "is love." We need the instances of uncompromising severity—not undesignedly, we may believe—blended with them, to remind us that He is one "who executeth judgment, and will by no means clear the *guilty.*"

MORNING TWENTY-SECOND.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters xvii. xviii. xix. from verse 16; xxi. from verse 18.

MAMA. The injunctions to the painful, but we may be sure, necessary severities which, in this day's reading, we find blended in the address of Moses with the most interesting prophecies regarding the future spiritual state of his nation—commence (as from the dignity and majesty of God we might expect them to do) with unmitigated rigour towards the sin of idolatry; that thing which, it is emphatically said, the "Lord hateth," and which the peculiar situation of the Jews, as subjects of the Almighty's visible government, rendered it impossible for Him to pass over or tolerate. How is this terrible denunciation worded?

MARY. "If there be found among you, within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wicked-

ness in the sight of the Lord thy God, by transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other Gods, and worshipped them, either the sun or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, ...; thou shalt bring forth that man, or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing unto thy gates, and shalt stone them with stones till they die."

MAMA. An awful punishment! and one which, as inflicted by the body of the people, (even, as is enjoined in another chapter, the nearest and dearest to the offender) was more likely to make a lasting impression than a mere judicial execution. Do you remark any particulars in the subsequent verses throwing light on New Testament transactions?

MARY. Yes, Mama. I see now why "two witnesses" were necessary to swear falsely against our Lord and Stephen.

MAMA. And in the account of the latter's martyrdom, did the witnesses (as here commanded) take an active part?

MARY. Yes, now I understand why they "laid down their clothes at the feet of Saul;" I suppose that they might be more at liberty to throw stones without them.

MAMA. And don't you remember our Lord's *calm but* soul-convicting proposal to the ac-

cusers of the erring woman, that "he who was without sin among them, should cast the first stone at her?" This, you will remember in future, was the duty of witnesses in every case of the three Mosaic deadly sins of idolatry, blasphemy, and adultery.

MARY. Does it not seem hard that the man should die who would not "hearken" to the priest's judgment?

MAMA. Yes, if the decision had been a merely human one. But as God's government over the Israelites was carried on by the singular method of "lively oracles," or by the mouth of an inspired high priest, rebellion against him was in fact disowning the supremacy of Jehovah.

Before proceeding to consider the wonderful prophecy contained in the second of our chapters, let us go on to the sixteenth verse of the nineteenth, and see how fearfully perjury on the part of witnesses is guarded against, and requited. Read me the words of the denunciation.

MARY. "If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong, ... behold if the witness be a false witness and hath testified falsely against his brother, then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother; so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain

shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you." Mama, if this last had been observed in our Lord's time, it would not have been so easy to get "men of Belial" to swear falsely against him.

MAMA. No, Mary; but what better could be expected among a people whose rulers were themselves the chief breakers of this, and the other "weightier matters" of that law which they had "made of none effect by their traditions." But let these awful words of the Most High make *us* shrink, not only from the gross guilt of perjury, but those minor approaches to it by which our "brother" is sometimes little less seriously injured than by "false witness" in a court of justice; and remember that there is a bar above, where all such "evil speaking" will be fearfully registered.

The third, and to us most appalling of the cases in which "pity" was among the Jews forbidden by Him whose name is compassion, is the sin of the rebellious undutiful son; which, though not punishable in our times by a human tribunal, leaves little hope at the footstool of One whose commandment of "Honour thy father and thy mother," is destined to endure when "heaven and earth shall have passed away." To impress

this more deeply on our minds, read the awful words of the Mosaic injunction.

MARY. "If any man have a stubborn or rebellious son which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him he will not hearken unto them,"—they were to bring him to the elders and judges, and tell them he was stubborn and rebellious, a glutton and a drunkard, and he was to be stoned to death! How horrible, Mama! Surely parents could never do this.

MAMA. Seldom, it may be believed, my dear; but the design of Omnipotence in holding out this terrible warning is not the less manifest. And do you observe one clause in the sentence, which, by stipulating for the wicked son's previous *fruitless chastisement*, seem to involve in a dreadful responsibility many parents of modern times; who, though they would shrink from inflicting temporal death on their offspring, hesitate not, by a total neglect of all wholesome discipline, to become the moral murderers of those whose souls they consign to eternal perdition. If the Hebrew father might not complain to the judges of his son's enormities till they had defied parental chastening, will not the son of Christian parents often "rise up in the judgment" against those who, in mistaken tenderness, or rather culpable

indolence, have brought him, an unrepentant "prodigal," to the feet of a *now* at length inexorable judge?

Let us all, young and old, Mary, draw instruction from this awful lesson; and let relative duties be performed among us, not out of slavish fear, but out of love to the declared will of Him who hath said, "He who keepeth my commandments, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother."

Before dismissing the chapter in which this fearful transaction occurs, read its concluding verse, and tell me what light you gather from it on the conduct of our Saviour's murderers, and on His peculiar condescension in the mode of death submitted to for our sakes.

MARY. It says, "He that hangeth on a tree is accursed of God." Surely that was not the case with His blessed Son!

MAMA. No, certainly, my dear. It only expresses the opinion entertained among Jews of the ignominy of a punishment reserved for atrocious offenders, and, consequently, deepens our sense of the infinite humility of Christ. You see also why his bigotted enemies so eagerly desired the removal of their victim from the "accursed tree" before the evening.

MARY. Yes, that their "land might not be

defiled." Mama, I think it was defiled far worse by the death of an innocent person.

MAMA. Right, Mary, and the defilement thus incurred continues, (in token of God's just indignation against hypocrisy) to this day. The Romans, to abject fear of whom they sacrificed the "Just One," and whose barbarous punishment they borrowed to glut their vengeance—have "taken away their place and nation;" the Mosaic law, which they hoped to perpetuate, by breaking its chief precepts against perjury, blasphemy, and murder, is abolished—and the Son of God, whom they strove to render, (as the margin of our chapter has it) the "curse of God," is become a "light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of all the ends of the earth!" This latter remark will aptly prepare the way for our return to the second of our chapters, verse 18th, and our consideration of the remarkable prediction by which Moses announces the future advent of Messiah, in his clear (yet nevertheless, by the Jews frequently overlooked) character of a "Prophet." How is it expressed?

MARY. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hear-

ken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."

MAMA. And fearfully has the refusal been "required," Mary, of the whole Jewish nation! But were there any among them who recognised in Jesus the successor thus promised to Moses?

MARY. I suppose, Mama, good people like Simeon and Anna did, when they rejoiced so at his birth.

MAMA. As the Messiah, or "Deliverer," they undoubtedly hailed him; but we have the testimony of three New Testament passages as to the distinct expectations of a great *prophetical* character, entertained by some at the period of our Saviour's appearing. How runs the question put by the priests and Levites to John the Baptist in the wilderness respecting his own character and pretensions?

MARY. Oh! I remember they asked him, "Art thou Elias?" or "that Prophet?" as if they expected them to be different.

MAMA. Yes, and in the same chapter, (the first of John's gospel,) Philip is made to say to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom *Moses, in the law*, and the prophets did write." The third passage, which expresses a similar belief, occurs where (by a miracle resembling those of Moses) Christ fed five thousand men in the wil-

derness, and they exclaimed, "This is of a truth *that prophet* which should come into the world!" Strange! that of the thousands convinced of and proclaiming this "truth," few indeed "believed unto the saving of their souls." This may shew us how compatible extorted and transient convictions are with continuance in sin, and ultimate "coming short of the kingdom of God."

Let it not be so with us, Mary. Since *we* cannot even plead the shadow of a doubt of the Divine commission of our great Prophet to palliate inattention to his teaching—let us remember his own awful assurance, that the "men of Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah," will rise up in judgment "against us who repent not, though a "greater than Jonah," nay a greater than Moses himself, has been "raised up among us," with the words of Omniscience in his mouth, and the power of Omnipotence in his hand!

MORNING TWENTY-THIRD.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters xxviii. and xxx.

MAMA. We are now come to perhaps the most striking part of the whole parting discourse of Moses, viz., his enumeration of the contrasted blessings and miseries which a more or less careful observance of the law of their God would entail in after-times upon his countrymen. Interesting as this contrast is in itself, from the pious eloquence of the departing prophet, and the affecting circumstances under which he addressed the nation he had "borne and nourished" so long; it is doubly so to us, from our knowledge of the literal fulfilment which these promises of "Him who cannot lie," and threatenings of Him "who is not a man that He should repent," have received and are still receiving in the history of the Jews.

You already know in a general manner how their idolatry has ended in spiritual desertion—*their* rejection of their great Prophet and King,

in national annihilation—and their long disbelief and disobedience of the things here spoken for their warning, in a degradation and dispersion which have made them a "proverb and an astonishment," not only to themselves, but to all who dwell on the face of the earth. Let a careful examination of the particulars of this wonderful anticipation of an unparalleled history, assist in confirming our faith; for whose "ensample" this and all other parts of the Old Testament scriptures were "written."

Which side of their contrasted destinies does "He who delighteth in mercy" first set forth to his people?

MARY. The good side, Mama, as much as to say that if they behaved well, there need never be any other.

MAMA. Yes; God who "is love" is "well pleased" to work by mild and gentle methods. His threatenings seem always reluctant vindications of his slighted mercies. What was the first general temporal blessing held out for obedience?

MARY. That God would "set them high above all nations of the earth." This they would surely like as they were so proud.

MAMA. Yes; but their very pride, as is too often the case, frustrated its own "lofty imaginings." Had they chosen to remain under the

direct government of God, this single circumstance, and its consequent prosperity, would have exalted them above "all kingdoms;" but by revolting, and desiring (as Moses had prophesied) a king, they forfeited the magnificent privilege, and sunk into the rank of a petty, though at times prosperous and renowned people. What were to be the particulars of their internal and domestic prosperity?

MARY. They were to be "blessed in the city and in the field, in the fruit of their body, and the fruit of their ground, and the fruit of their cattle; blessed in their basket and store; blessed when they came in and went out." Oh! Mama, if God would promise that to a people now, surely they would do *any thing* for such happiness!

MAMA. What! those who will do nothing for the happiness of heaven? But perhaps you are so far right, that earthly success would by many be esteemed the more valuable boon. We shall see if it proved a sufficient one to command obedience from the Jews.

What higher promises than those of mere wealth and plenty, did even a dispensation confined to this world hold out to obedient Israel?

MARY. "The Lord shall establish thee a holy people unto himself . . . . . and all the

people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord."

MAMA. What a glorious distinction to barter, as the Jews idly did, for "gods of wood and stone that could not profit them"—and kings, like those of "the nations round about them,"—capricious, tyrannical, liable to defeat and disgrace, and distinguished too often for nothing but pre-eminence in folly and wickedness!

But are the Jews the only people who have disowned God's supremacy? Of whom, in the parable of the talents, does *our* prince and lawgiver say,—"But these mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me?"

MARY. Oh! Mama, how awful! It can be of no one but the idle servants who did nothing with their lord's money.

MAMA. So you see that people may "reject God" in other ways than denying his authority, viz.—by not obeying it. How does Moses confirm this opinion at the 14th verse?

MARY. "Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left."

MAMA. Let us now see what was to happen in the event of their doing so, as Moses too well knew they would. Alas! the Pisgah-view of the

beauties of the land he was forbidden to enter, was not the only melancholy picture, unveiled, as his dissolution approached—to the "man whose eyes God opened!" The prophetic revelation of his country's apostacy and ruin must have been a spectacle bitterer still! How does the aged prophet—sadly enough we may suppose—endeavour to avert their ruin?

MARY. By reversing all the blessings he had pronounced before; and giving an answering curse for every one of them. Mama, it makes one's flesh creep to hear such dreadful words, almost out of God's own mouth.

MAMA. Let it make our souls tremble, Mary, lest we incur them, or the far worse penalties of the "worm which dieth not," and "the fire which is not quenched." Both, remember, issue from the same dread immutable source. The Jews have known it to their cost in this world. What will be the condition of those who awake to the knowledge of it in another?

MARY. Mama, the curses are frightfully minute. I understand too well about "pestilence, and consumption, and fever, and the sword, and blasting and mildew." But what does it mean that the "heaven over their head should be brass, and the earth under their feet iron," and "the rain of their land powder and dust?"

MAMA. It means such a parching and desolating drought as we can form a very imperfect idea of; but sufficient in those climates, almost to realize the vivid language of inspiration. A "rain of dust" was a figure by no means unintelligible to the Israelite, whose acquaintance with the desert must have familiarized him with the frightful whirlwinds of sand, so fatal there to the unwary traveller.

The cruel oppressions and spoliation of property next mentioned, were not confined to the times of the first apostacy; but have pursued them into all lands almost to our own day. Till of late the portion of the Jew was, even in Christian countries, "madness and astonishment of heart," and a degree of insecurity that hardly allowed him the enjoyment of any one external possession; while his concealed wealth was often wrung from him by extremity of torture; so truly have they been, as Moses here predicts, "oppressed and spoiled for evermore."

What is said of that most precious possession "the fruit of their body," when rendered "accursed" by the sins of rebellious parents?

MARY. Their "sons and daughters were to be given to another people."

MAMA. Did this happen once only?

MARY. No; they were carried away captive several times.

MAMA. How long did one of those memorable exiles continue?

MARY. Seventy years.

MAMA. Consequently the "eyes" of parents must not only have "failed with longing" for those whom their national sins had banished—but closed in sorrow long ere the return of the diminished handful who were at length permitted to revisit Jerusalem. Was the captivity to be confined to prisoners of ordinary rank?

MARY. The Lord was to "bring them and their king whom they would set over them" into a strange country, to serve "gods of wood and stone."

MAMA. Two monarchs—Jehoiakin and Zedekiah—fulfilled this melancholy prediction; as they did those of prophets nearer their own times, by the curious circumstance of the one (whose eyes were put out) never "seeing" the land in which he nevertheless lived—and the other "feeding the fowls of heaven with his carcase," (a most unlikely indignity for a Jewish monarch) by dying a neglected captive in a heathen land.

Leaving their becoming a "proverb and a

byword, and an astonishment," to be more amply fulfilled still, when, in addition to rebelling against the "Lord of the vineyard," these "wicked husbandmen" had slain his blessed Son—let us proceed to observe the wonderful minuteness with which their last great national disaster, the Roman invasion and conquest, were (at a time, remember, when the empire of Rome and kingdom of Judah were alike destitute of existence) described by the prophetic historian. Not Josephus himself, the faithful recorder of those unheard of calamities, excels, in clearness and precision, him who saw with the eye of faith "the things that should be hereafter."

What kind of a nation was at length to fill up the measure of Israel's woes and punishment?

MARY. "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar—swift as the eagle flieth: a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand —a nation of fierce countenance ——"

MAMA. Stop, Mary, and tell me how these particulars especially apply to the Romans, above the Chaldeans, Assyrians, and others, who had previously "vexed and oppressed Israel?" Had Italy any near affinity (like those countries) with Judea?

MARY. No; the sea was between them.

MAMA. Do you know why the Romans are likened to eagles?

MARY. I suppose, because they had eagles for their standards; Papa showed me some on his coins the other day.

MAMA. Very well remembered. It is not the first time coins have been of service in elucidating history. Were the Jews likely to understand the "tongue" of the Roman invaders?

MARY. I don't think it, as they lived so far away. But did they understand those of the other nations better?

MAMA. Certainly, for we have still extant Syriac and Chaldee versions of the Old Testament; and long captivities and frequent intercourse made them but too conversant with the language, as well as errors, of adjoining nations. Were the Romans distinguished for superior fierceness?

MARY. Oh! yes; they were never happy but when making war.

MAMA. And for not regarding the old, or "showing favour to the young?"

MARY. I don't know so well about the old, but I remember Brutus condemned his own two sons to death because they displeased him.

MAMA. Well applied again. Human learn-

ing is never so useful as when it corroborates Scripture; which it perpetually does. To make you understand the "besieging in all their gates" with which the memorable siege of Jerusalem was ushered in—you shall read Josephus, whose history is almost a continued chronicle of desperate, though hopeless resistance, to these inexorable "besiegers" of the hitherto impregnable "high and fenced walls" of the "hill country" of Judea.

MARY. Mama, I remember the shocking story of the woman eating her son occurred when we were reading the Book of Kings, and you told me then that it happened again in the time of the Romans.

MAMA. And with this remarkable confirmation of the prophetic minutiae, that the "tender and delicate woman," whose "eye was then evil" towards the fruit of her womb, was so rich and noble, as to make her being driven to such extremities a proof that the Roman sword was at this time the least scourge of the unhappy and sinful Jewish nation.

This wretched woman, whose name was Mary, the daughter of Eleazer, was goaded (do you not shudder to hear it?) to this horrid expedient by the daily plunder of her own countrymen—the obstinate and infatuated defenders of a city God

had determined to destroy. Well might Mos say, she should eat her unnatural meal "secre ly," for, having covered up the residue for a other day, the scent of it attracted the mercile spoilers; and, abandoned as they were, when sl showed them the share she said she had reserv for them, they fled in horror and amazement!

MARY. Oh! Mama! what a shocking hi tory!

MAMA. Yes, my child, and one fraught wi awful instruction. Shall *we* not "fear that gl rious name, the Lord our God," in the negle of which you read all this soul-harrowing mise and barbarity originated? The horrors of tl siege of Jerusalem (of which this is but a spec men) transcend all the relations of history, an drew from the conquerors themselves freque and ineffectual testimonies of compassion. Titu the agent of God in its destruction, strove in va to frustrate the decrees of Jehovah. The Ten ple, which he wished to preserve, accident (a the Romans called it, but *we* know Providence gave up to devouring flames. The plough passe reluctantly over the site of the city, and not or stone of the proud buildings over which the So of God had wept in vain, remained upon anothe

Nor did the inhabitants escape in their city annihilation. More than a million of souls pe

ished during the siege—ninety-seven thousand were sent into captivity—nor was the chief scene of this slavery less miraculous than all the rest. Look forward to the end of the chapter, and see what is said about Egypt.

MARY. "And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto you, ye shall see it no more again. And ye shall be sold to your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you."

MAMA. All which was exactly fulfilled, even to the shipwreck of whole loads of the wretched captives, and slaughter of others for whom (when a whole nation was thus for sale) purchasers could not be found. After such calamities, their being "left few in number" is a matter of course, but let the *cause* never escape us, "Because they would not obey the Lord their God."

The history of their subsequent dispersion corresponds even more strictly than what we have already observed with what is here predicted of their persecuted and insecure condition. Truly did their "lives hang in doubt before them," when, in all Catholic countries, a mere suspicion of Judaism could at any time bring those who secretly professed it to the stake; and when thousands perished by fire, for adherence (such are

the marvellous retributive ways of Heaven) to the faith they first lost home and country for deserting.

With regard to the miserable remnant who yet linger around the site of their ancient splendour, fully is this part of the prediction accomplished, "The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high, and thou shalt be brought very low." For the haughty Turk lords it over the shrunken walls of Jerusalem, and spurns with a contempt (the only feeling he has in common with Christians) the trembling Jew who cowers along her deserted streets.

Let us relieve our minds, after this distressing recital, by a hasty glance at the 30th chapter, (the natural sequel to the one we have been reading) and try to draw from the graciously fulfilled promises of return from earlier captivities, and re-conversion of heart to God, some encouragement to hope, that the "outcasts of Israel" may yet be restored, not only to their own land, but to the service and favour of Jehovah, and the contrite acknowledgment of "Him whom they pierced."

The latter part of the encouraging address of Moses is one which may come home yet more feelingly to the highly favoured Christian. Truly may it be said of us, "The word is very nigh

unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." *We* have not to say, "Who shall go up to heaven to bring it us, that we may hear and do it?"—seeing that one "mighty to save" has come down unsolicited, with the lovely precepts of Christianity in one hand, and the glad tidings of salvation in the other. And does He not say with a voice more authoritative far than that of Moses, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore *choose life*, that both thou and thy seed may live?" May He never have cause to say to any of us, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life!"

MORNING TWENTY-FOURTH.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters xxxi. and xxxii. to verse 48.

MAMA. We are drawing fast, my dear Mary, to the close of the ministry of the eminent, and, as regarded his fellow-creatures, upright and unblameable leader of Israel; and cannot help remarking how wonderfully (as if to compensate for the forfeiture of temporal privileges) his spiritual discernment of things future as well as present seems to have been enlarged.

We have already heard him predict, with a minuteness and precision the most extraordinary, the apostacy and consequent miseries of his nation, and in so far, indeed, the clearness of mental vision vouchsafed him must have been (as we observed) rather a source of pain than pleasure. But in the chapters we have read to-day, we find him enabled to sing the praises of Jehovah in a manner worthy of his divine subject, and with somewhat of the anticipated fervour of

one who was ere long to praise Him in the choir of the redeemed on high.

Before proceeding to this sublime hymn, we must not overlook the gracious provision made by God, for the temporal welfare of His people, by supplying them with a second Moses, in the person of the upright and long-tried Joshua; nor the disinterested warmth with which the superseded lawgiver encourages his successor to bring the people into the "good land" which the Lord their God hath given them. On what infallible grounds does he build his assurances of safety and success?

MARY. "And the Lord it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee neither forsake thee."

MAMA. And have we Christians any ground to apply to ourselves this most comfortable promise?

MARY. Surely we have, Mama. Does not our Lord somewhere say to his disciples, "Lo! I am with you always, unto the end of the world?"

MAMA. An excellent answer, Mary, and one with which (as occurring to yourself) I am better pleased than if you had happened to recollect the actual application of the words of Moses to Joshua, by the Apostle Paul to the Hebrew

converts of his day, as a motive for "casting all their care" upon God, and "being content with such things as they have." You are right in supposing that He who failed not, neither forsook Joshua and his people till their final settlement in the earthly Canaan—will yet more certainly accompany, in every stage of his heavenward pilgrimage, each faithful member of the "Israel of God."

But, not content with appointing a temporal leader, and "strengthening his heart" with such lofty assurances of Divine protection—how did Moses (under God's direction no doubt) provide for the preservation and future knowledge of the law?

MARY. He wrote it down, and when he had done writing it, he said to the Levites which bare the ark of the Lord, "Take the book of the law, and put it inside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."

MAMA. A witness—and why, Mary?

MARY. Because he knew that if they had rebelled against God while he yet lived, they would do it much worse after his death.

MAMA. Such being the case, was this careful teacher satisfied that God's law (the only possi-

ble preservative against such apostacy) should remain in the honourable place to which he had consigned it?

MARY. No, no; if it had stayed there, they might have pretended they did not know it. But every seven years (in the year of release) it was to be read over to all the people, men, women, and children.

MAMA. Thus reminding the elders of their known duty, and (as we have so often had occasion to observe) testifying God's fatherly care for the instruction of the rising generation—that they also "might hear, and learn to fear the Lord their God." My dear Mary, are not young people worse than ungrateful, if the God who had the "little ones" of Israel "in such continual remembrance," or the Saviour whose first public blessing rested on the infant children of his very enemies—sees his provision for their improvement slighted, and his love for their souls repaid with coldness and neglect? Surely every irreligious child seeks to make "Him a liar" who hath said that "of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Do you recollect any remarkable occasion when this reading of the law occurred in aftertimes?

MARY. In the book of Kings we read of its

being done by Josiah, when it was found in the temple, after it had been long forgotten; and do you remember, Mama, how shocked and frightened all who then heard it were?

MAMA. As we should be, were it possible for the pure commands of God, and the awful threatenings with which they are accompanied in the Old Testament, to be learned by us for the first time, with no Mediator to atone for our own sad deficiencies! But a still more public and striking repetition of the law took place under Ezra, on the return of the people from their long captivity—the interesting account of which, and all the particulars of that happy restoration, I think we must take for our next reading.

But we must now proceed to the noble "song of Moses,"—and in what far higher light than as a mere effusion of human piety and gratitude, is it here ushered in by God himself?

MARY. He commanded Moses to "write it, and teach it to the children of Israel, and put it into their mouths, to be a witness for *Him* against them."

MAMA. It is a terrible thing, Mary, when the very goodness and greatness of God are thus marshalled in judgment against us; as they are, alas! against too many by whom (like the Jews)

they are abused and forgotten! How did Jehovah foresee this ungrateful people would repay Him?

MARY. When they had "eaten and filled themselves, and waxed fat," *then* they were to "turn unto other gods to serve them, and provoke God and break his covenant." This was really so unlikely a time, Mama, that unless God had "known their imaginations before," (as He says here) one never could have guessed it!

MAMA. Alas! Mary, what had Omniscience long before—when the world was yet fresh from the hands of its Creator—declared respecting "*all* the imaginations of man's heart?"

MARY. That they were "only evil continually." Mama, this has always vexed me, for one loves to think some people good.

MAMA. And thus undoubtedly *we* are authorized to regard the few with whom God in ancient times "talked as with a friend," and who are even (in a restricted sense) said to be "perfect" before Him; and far more may we cherish such pleasing views with regard to the many Christians who "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called." But what the voice of God and the voice of conscience alike call us to acknowledge, is, that whatever of even imperfect virtue resides in the breast of any human being,

is the work of "Him from whom every good thing cometh;" and that the goodness (as you love to call it) of ourselves or others, is as much —aye in a higher degree—matter of humble thankfulness to the Giver, as personal advantages or temporal possessions. The Scripture representations of human depravity which offend the profane, and unduly depress the pious—are rather, to the eye of faith, the most glorious trophy in the crown of that conqueror, (over sin as well as death,) who out of such ruined and degraded materials has built unto Himself a church "without spot or wrinkle"—pure as the heavens, and worthy to exist in the presence of God for ever!

But we have wandered a great way from the song of Moses. Whom did he bring together to hear it?

MARY. All the elders of the tribes and officers; that he might "call heaven and earth to record against them."

MAMA. And in what sublime words is this invocation couched?

MARY. "Give ear, O heavens! and I will speak; and hear, O earth! the words of my mouth."

MAMA. Can we conceive anything much more striking than the venerable prophet of Israel, his vigour undecayed by an hundred and

twenty years of toil and vicissitude—appealing to Heaven and earth as witnesses between their great Author and men, the only creatures of his hand who ever dream of defying His authority, or disobeying His laws. But though by the same noble figure of speech which represents the "heavens as declaring the glory of God," mere inanimate nature may be called in to reproach the insensibility of man—we cannot doubt that here the *inhabitants* both of "Heaven above and earth beneath" are summoned to the controversy. And if we, fallible mortals, and partakers, as we hourly are, in the guilt of the rebellion, cannot but admit its enormity; what judgment do you think the heavenly hosts—those "ministers of God that do his pleasure"—must form of so monstrous a scene as a people denying the "Father that bought them"—"the God who made and established them?"

Let us not overlook, amid the magnificence of the subject, the gentle and fructifying effect, which, on others at least, if not on the Jews, the publication of the "name of the Lord" was expected by Moses to produce. What does he say of this his most precious "doctrine?"

MARY. That it should "drop as small rain on the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass."

MAMA. And have such blessed and ameliorating effects been found to follow the knowledge of the true God?

MARY. Oh! yes; it is only savages now who are fierce and bloody, as all men used to be in heathen times.

MAMA. Human passions, I fear, Mary, are still the same in some unregenerate bosoms; but certainly (as we observed about slavery) our holy religion has softened them in a degree no engine less mighty to the "pulling down of strongholds" could have accomplished. And it has been done by the same silent refreshing influence, with which the showers or dews of night "distil" on the formerly arid soil, making "grass to spring up, and herbs for the food of man."

In what immutable character does the "doctrine" thus introduced set forth the Almighty?

MARY. As a Rock.

MAMA. Or still more definitely "*the* Rock," Mary; as if He alone, as is most true, possessed stability or strength. By what methods deeply interesting to them does this immutability of God manifest itself?

MARY. "His work is perfect; all his ways are judgment. A God of truth, and without iniquity—just and right is He."

MAMA. Attributes these, one would think,

sufficient to secure to Him the worship of the universe—to form (as we know they do) the admiration of angels, and call forth, from all the subjects of so righteous a government, one universal song of joyful adoration. But what were the peculiar claims on Jewish obedience of this great and unchangeable Lord?

MARY. Oh! endless. It says that He "took Jacob for His portion and inheritance," preserved him in the "waste and howling wilderness," "instructed him and kept him as the apple of his eye," and led him about "as an eagle stirreth up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, and bearing them on her wings." And so He did, Mama, all the time we have been reading of in the wilderness; but there is one thing here that puzzles me. I daresay they might get "honey" and "oil" there (as we know they did water) out of the "flinty rock;" but surely they had not "butter" and "milk," and "wheat" and "grapes," else manna would not have continued.

MAMA. I am glad you have made the remark, as it gives me an opportunity of pointing out to you, throughout this and many portions of the prophetic word, how completely the Spirit of Him, in whose sight "a thousand years are as one day," took possession of those whom He inspired, and made events yet future seem not

only present, but even *past* in their eyes. The "waxing fat," and "kicking of Jeshurun;" the "sacrificing to devils," which Moses recounts and bewails—as yet (like the fertility and wealth in which they originated) existed but in the foreknowledge of God. Yet does this genuine "seer," aided by the All-seeing eye of Him to whom the long ages of futurity are "as yesterday, or a watch that is past," trace through their remotest consequences, blessings not yet conferred, and sins not yet conceived.

There is no external testimony so strong as this internal one to the divine inspiration of the Old Testament prophecies. Impostors might (on the strength of probabilities) hazard predictions; but it is the "man whose eyes God hath opened" who can alone overleap, like Him, the bounds of time and space, and relate, with the warmth of an indignant eye-witness, events as unborn as the generations who are to be engaged in them.

What proof of this transportation, as it were, into futurity have we in Moses's expressions in the 19th verse?

MARY. He says—"And when the Lord *saw it, He abhorred them;* on account of the provoking of His sons, and of His daughters."

MAMA. It is not without reason that the

latter were particularized. Do you remember what Jeremiah accuses the women of doing in his time?

MARY. "Baking cakes to the queen of heaven," Mama. I remember your telling me that meant worshipping the moon, which God, in our yesterday's chapter, particularly forbids. But though I do not so much wonder at foolish people who forget God, adoring the beautiful sun and moon, I don't remember any nation but the Jews that were wicked enough to worship "devils."

MAMA. If the character of deities, like that of their votaries, is to be "known by their works," truly might it be said of the heathen divinities, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do." For there was not a sin (of all which we know *him* to be the author) or a barbarity (and *he*, we know, "is a murderer from the beginning") which had not its place in the rites of the demon-worship of antiquity. If we see the absurdity of the Jewish notion of "Satan casting out Satan," with equal clearness may we judge, that the gods by whose worship his "kingdom" was sustained and advanced, were (in as far as they existed at all) evil spirits of kindred nature and malignity.

But leaving the nation "void of understand-

ing" (as they are called by God) who could "turn after them" to reap the bitter fruit of their apostacy, let us conclude our review of their crime and punishment, by taking home to ourselves the merciful expression of even an offended God—"O that they were wise—that they understood this—that they would consider their latter end!"

MORNING TWENTY-FIFTH.

LESSON.—Deuteronomy, Chapters xxxiii. and xxxiv.

MAMA. The chapter which stands first in our reading on this day—when (with regret on my part at least, and I am apt to think on yours also) we shall take our leave of the amiable, as well as eminent person whose blessing on his nation it records—is far from being capable of such minute and clear explanation as the wonderful prophecy we were considering yesterday. Not only are the general features of the national history of the Jews far more easily traced and familiar to us than the family distinctions and peculiarities of the tribes of Israel, but the blessing itself (like the corresponding one of Jacob, which it much resembles) is couched in language so oriental and figurative, that to assign its precise meaning has been too much for abler commentators than ourselves. Nor is it necessary

that we should do more than glance at the remarkable coincidence of many parts of the prediction with the position and state of the various tribes; because we shall find ample and more edifying matter for reflection in the noble manifestation of the Almighty with which the chapter begins and terminates.

From whence does Moses represent the glory of the Lord as first illuminating his chosen people?

MARY. From "Sinai," Mama, and "Seir," and "Mount Paran." I know the law was given from Sinai; where were Seir and Paran?

MAMA. Mount Seir (the lot of the children of Edom) lay, as we have read, in the course of the Israelites through the wilderness of Paran; the general name of which is here used for the adjoining summits of Horeb. Why is it said the Lord "shined forth" from thence?

MARY. Because I daresay His glory must have been very bright there, when even Moses's face shone so when he came down that the people could not look at him till he put a veil on. I suppose on account of the "thunders and lightnings, and fire," the law is here called a "fiery law."

MAMA. It was such, in a literal sense, Mary; and not less so in its purifying and refining tendency, and consuming severity, when resisted and

disobeyed. Have you ever sufficiently reflected what it is to be set free from the "fiery" terrors of a law, "turning," (like the flaming sword of the Cherubim) "this way and that to keep the access of the tree of life," into the "glorious liberty of the sons of God?" For though the gospel has not taken so much as "one jot or tittle" from the moral acquirements of Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"—we have a surety for their unerring performance in our stead; provided we rest as unreservedly on Him as if we could do nothing of ourselves, yet "work out our salvation" with as much honest earnestness, as if we were still under the covenant whose conditions were, "Do this and live."

Even under this preliminary and apparently harsher dispensation, it is said of Jehovah that He "loved his people," and that "His saints are in His hand." But remark the corresponding attitude in which they are placed, of "sitting at his feet, and receiving his words;" the usual expressions for dutifully imbibing instruction in the East. Do you remember where Paul was said to have acquired his knowledge of the Jewish law?

MARY. "At the feet of Gamaliel."

MARY. Very right. And observe, it is not merely said they shall hear, but shall "receive"

—that is, admit into their hearts, and practise the precepts of the Almighty Lawgiver of Sinai, as delivered, at His command, by His servant Moses.

MARY. Moses is called a "king," in the next verse; I did not think he had been one.

MAMA. The word in scripture often means simply a chief, or leader; and evidently does so here, the object being to establish his superiority in rank to the other "heads of the people" represented as gathered round him.

The particulars of the blessing bestowed by him on the assembled "tribes," we must pass over briefly; partly on account of the obscurity inseparable from our imperfect knowledge of their distinct histories, and partly from my wish to conclude our review of the books of Moses, by reflections more immediately concerning ourselves. We may merely remark the station prophetically assigned to Judah as next in rank (though by no means so in the order of birth) to the elder of all the sons of Jacob, Reuben. Learned men have discovered a peculiar propriety in the petition that God would "bring *Judah* unto his people," and in sufficient numbers, and be a help unto him from his enemies; because this tribe alone, with a remnant of Benjamin, and of the Levites, returned from capti-

vity under Ezra, weak, desponding, and harassed by surrounding unbelievers. And as it was through the "seed of David" that God designed perpetuating his people, nothing could be more natural (though less called for by the *then* flourishing state of Judah) than this prospective petition. Levi and Benjamin, the other restored tribes, you will observe, occur next in the prophetic train of thought suggested to Moses; and the blessing upon the former is as ample and peculiar as befitted their consecration to the sacred office of the priesthood. But do you know to what Moses alludes in the remarkable expression about Levi not "knowing" nor "acknowledging" his nearest and dearest? The transaction is not new to you.

MAMA. Let me think. Oh! I remember, in one of the rebellions against God, the sons of Levi were ordered to "slay every man his brother, and every man his companion and neighbour."

MAMA. Yes, after the making of the golden calf; and we remarked what a painful sacrifice these servants of God were called to for the sin of their leader Aaron. On a later occasion, viz. the seduction of the people to the worship of Baal Peor by the Moabites—Eleazar, the son of Aaron, voluntarily slew the chief offenders, and by so doing obtained for his family the perpetual

priesthood, and contributed to the honourable character of zeal for God here assigned to his tribe.

MARY. Mama, what is the "Urim and Thummim?" I have seen these words often in the Bible

MAMA. In themselves they signify "light" and "perfection;" but their precise meaning, as applied to the divine oracles vouchsafed to the high priest of Israel, is nowhere explained in Scripture. We only know that this object of our ungratified curiosity, whatever it was, resided in the breastplate of Aaron, which, as I daresay you have read, and observed in Scripture prints, was composed of twelve precious stones, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Jews' traditional opinion on the subject (for they have no more) is, that when God revealed Himself—as He is said to do—"by Urim and Thummim," He did so by a peculiar shining on the stones of the breastplate itself; while some have supposed it was by oracular sounds from the same quarter. All we know on so difficult a subject is, that without this mysterious symbol, even Aaron (the type of a greater mediator) durst not go in before the Lord. We are told in Exodus he was to wear it on his *heart;* whence we may draw one lesson, as to the resi-

dence *there* of all prevailing intercession on the one part, or saving divine influence on the other.

Have you any idea why Benjamin is called "beloved of the Lord," and why the Lord was said to "dwell between his shoulders, and cover him all the day long?"

MARY. I am sure I don't know.

MAMA. Nor did I, my dear, till lately, that the temple of Jerusalem, that favoured residence of the glory of the Lord, actually stood on the portion of Benjamin; and not, like the city itself, in the territory of the tribe of Judah.

Of the other tribes we can only briefly notice, that Joseph has here (as in his partial father Jacob's blessing) a high rank and fertile portion assigned him; while that of the others corresponds remarkably with what has come down to us of their local position and chief characteristics. Above all, let us observe, that this comprehensive benediction ends as it began, by ascribing unrivalled glory and majesty to the "God of Jeshurun, who rideth on the heavens, and in his excellency on the sky;" and by celebrating the peculiar happiness of a people "whose refuge is the Eternal God, and underneath whom are the Everlasting arms." Shall we not say with Moses, "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord?"—or ra-

ther, alas! (now that the glory has sadly departed from Israel) with pious David, "Happy is the people that is in such a case!"

We must now enter on the painful task of bidding adieu to Moses, our edifying companion during so long a period. That we may do so, however, with more both of sympathy for him, and acquiescence in the righteous dispensation of God, look back to the verses we omitted yesterday, at the end of the 32d chapter, and see in what terms His ancient servant is warned of his approaching end.

MARY. "Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, and behold the land of Canaan which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession—and die in the mount." Mama, it was a terrible thing to be told to go and "die!"

MAMA. My dear, do not even the best people among ourselves count such warnings merciful, and do we not pray against "sudden death" as a misfortune? Moses knew, (and *you* know why) he was not to be permitted to enter Canaan, and therefore the view graciously vouchsafed him of its beauty and fertility, must have been hailed as a token of God's mitigated displeasure, and as a glorious earnest of that better country to which (as we know on the authority of an apostle) he looked believingly forward. Nor is it otherwise

now. These two things, a summons to depart, and a foretaste of the Christian's land of promise, blessed be God for it! frequently accompany each other; and where is the real Christian who would not hail the one to be favoured with a full and joyful anticipation of the other? On this, still more than on the glowing picture of the earthly paradise before him, let us hope that the eyes of the venerable patriarch closed in peace, to open in that immortal inheritance whence we know he descended in a glorified body, to converse with the great "Prophet," whom God at length "raised up" among his people.

The cause of his "sepulchre" being concealed by God I have already explained to you. Do you remember it?

MARY. Yes; for fear idolatrous worship should be paid to it. I am not surprised the Israelites should have "mourned thirty days" for good Moses, I feel really quite sorry to part with him, and don't know how to thank you for making me so well acquainted with him, and with all the history of the children of Israel. I hope I shall remember it, and not get bewildered again with the sacrifices, and purifications, and things that made it so difficult.

MAMA. I hope not, my dear. But these, remember, had all their specific use, and will

by and bye, claim your most serious attention as connected with the sacrifice of Christ, of which they are all more or less typical. In the meantime, I would fain hope that the more obvious features of the dealings of God with the Israelites in the wilderness, have left engraved on your young mind the great lessons they are so well fitted to convey. Let me have the satisfaction of hearing how they have impressed you.

MARY. Mama, I think I know better than I did, how great and good God is; and how wicked and ungrateful people like ourselves can be.

MAMA. Comprehensive knowledge, my dear child, if it indeed includes right apprehension of God, and a due estimate of the fallibility and lost state by nature of man. And blessed knowledge will it be, if, as intended by its divine author, the law of Moses performs its appointed office of a "schoolmaster," and brings you in more humility, self-abasement, and dependence to the feet of Christ—the great "end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth."

THE END.